DRAFT Public Participation Plan & Toolkit

Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission

[TITLE PAGE]

The preparation of this document was financed jointly by the 19 municipalities of Chittenden County; the Vermont Agency of Transportation; and the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

English
Attention: If you wish to request this document in a language other than English, or wish to contact CCRPC for language assistance, please call (802) 846-4490.

Nepali | नेपाली

ध्यान दिनुहोस्: यदि तपाईं यो कागजात अंग्रेजी बाहेक अन्य भाषामा प्राप्त गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ, वा भाषा सम्बन्धी सहयोगका लागि CCRPC लाई सम्पर्क गर्न चाहनुहुन्छ भने, कृपया (802) 846-4490 मा फोन गर्नुहोस्।

Somali | Soomaali
Fiiro gaar ah: Haddii aad rabto inaad dukumeentigan ku hesho luqad aan Ingiriisi ahayn, ama aad rabto inaad CCRPC kala xiriirto caawimaad luqadeed, fadlan wac (802) 846-4490.

Swahili | Kiswahili
Tahadhari: Ikiwa ungependa kuomba hati hii katika lugha nyingine isipokuwa Kiingereza, au ungependa kuwasiliana na CCRPC kwa usaidizi wa lugha, tafadhali piga simu (802) 846-4490.

Arabic | العربية
تنبيه: إذا كنت ترغب في طلب هذه الوثيقة بلغة غير الإنجليزية، أو ترغب في الاتصال بـ CCRPC (802) للحصول على مساعدة لغوية، يُرجى الاتصال بالرقم 4490-846.

Spanish | Español
Atención: Si desea solicitar este documento en un idioma que no sea inglés, o desea comunicarse con CCRPC para obtener asistencia lingüística, llame al (802) 846-4490.

French | Français
Attention : Si vous souhaitez obtenir ce document dans une langue autre que l’anglais, ou contacter le CCRPC pour obtenir une assistance linguistique, veuillez appeler le (802) 846-4490.

Created using Google Translate.

Acknowledgements

The CCRPC Public Participation Plan & Toolkit was developed with input from CCRPC staff, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), the CCRPC Board of Directors, and community and organizational partners. CCRPC thanks everyone who contributed their time, experience, and feedback to the development of this Plan. The CEAC in particular serves as an invaluable resource to CCRPC, bringing diverse lived experiences and perspectives into the organization's work, helping strengthen community engagement practices.

CCRPC Staff

Dan Albrecht · Charlie Baker · Maya Balassa · Cymone Bedford · Jason Charest · Forest Cohen · Bryan Davis · Marshall Distel · Chris Dubin · Christine Ford · Eliana Fox · Amy Irvin Witham · Ann Janda · Kate McCarthy · Sarah Muskin · Trudy Namubiru · Melanie Needle · Taylor Newton · Sai Sarepalli · Darren Schibler · Kim Smith · Anne Nelson Stoner · Emma Vaughn

Community Engagement Advisory Committee

Catarina Campbell · Omar Derzi · Lydia Diamond · Melissa Heitkamp · Zoraya Hightower · Ragab Mohamed · Madafar Jassim · Faried Munarsyah · Elaine Wang · Bruce Wilson · Mona Tolba · Urmila Chhetri · Kashka Orlow · KJules Wetchi · Amjed Almulla · Rachel Batterson · Mark Hughes · Ralph Perkins · Jaeda Spradley-Gavin · Roohullah Aman

Board of Directors

Tess O'Brien · Garret Mott · Andy Montroll · Dana Hanley · Jacki Murphy · Andy Watts · Cristin Gildea · Michael Bissonette · Joe Segale · Catherine McMains · Chuck Wilton · Bard Hill · Abel Russ · Jeff Carr · Chris Shaw · Brad Holden · Ben Bornstein · Karen Peterson · Michael O'Brien · Joe Flynn · Tom Eaton · Miles Waite · Tim Baechle · Bruce Wilson · Clayton Clark · Larry Lackey · Mary Anne Michaels · David Wulfson · Jacqui DeMent · Leah Sirmin

Community Partners

CCRPC also thanks the organizations and community partners who reviewed drafts of the Plan and shared feedback, examples, and expertise that helped strengthen the final document.

[Insert names of community partners/organizations who provided review]

Table of Contents

Introduction 4

Background 5

Purpose 5

Plan Framework & How to Use this Plan 5

PART ONE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 6

Foundations of This Plan 7

CCRPC Activities & How to Get Involved 7

Major Plans & Programs 8

Summary of Public Participation Policies for Plan / Program Adoption 8

Summary of Public Participation Policies for Plan / Program Amendments 9

CCRPC Board & Committees 10

How to Get Involved 11

CCRPC's Approach to Community Engagement 12

Moving Beyond Traditional Public Participation 12

Trends in Community Engagement 12

Guiding Principles 13

The Spectrum of Public Participation 14

PART TWO: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT 14

The Four-Stage Framework & The Project Lifecycle 15

Design 15

Plan 16

Plan to Inform – All Projects 17

Plan for Public Participation – Projects Beyond Inform 17

Section 1 and 2. Project Information & Summary 18

Section 3. Project Impacts 18

Section 4. Level of Public Participation 19

Section 5. Learn Before You Engage 20

Section 6. Identify Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs) 20

Section 7. Engagement Strategies 21

Section 8. Accessibility 26

Section 9. Resources & Budget 26

From PIE Worksheet to Engagement Plan 27

Implement 28

Project Materials 28
Addressing Common Barriers to Engagement 29
Providing Language Access Services 29
Providing Stipends 29
Working with Community Liaisons 29
Transportation Support 29
Providing Childcare at Meetings 30
Providing Food at Meetings 30
Working Across Cultures 31
Accessible Meetings 31
Open Meeting Law 31
Meeting Date & Location 32
Guidelines for Accessible & Equitable Online Meetings 32
Facilitating Meetings 33
How to Create an Agenda 33
Tips for Creating a Productive Discussion 33
Evaluate 34
Getting to Results Framework 35
Tracking Engagement & Project Closeout 35
Track Engagement Throughout the Project 35
At Project Closeout 36
Collecting Demographic Information 37
Continuous Improvement 37
Appendix A: Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet 38
Appendix B: Community Engagement Plan Template 43
Appendix C: Tools & Resources Index 44
Appendix D: Stipend Policy 44
Appendix E: Community Liaison Policy 44
Appendix F: Language Access Plan 44
Appendix G: References & Supporting Resources 44
Appendix H: Legal Regulations & Requirements 44
Appendix I: TIP Amendment Policy 44

Introduction

Background

The Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) serves as the principal forum for planning, policy, and community development in Chittenden County, Vermont. As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Planning Commission (RPC), CCRPC provides planning, coordination and technical assistance to the county's 19 municipalities.

Community engagement is central to this work. Decisions about transportation, housing, land use, economic development, natural resources, emergency preparedness, and other planning efforts affect people in a myriad of meaningful ways. Public participation helps ensure that those who are most affected by these decisions have opportunities to shape them, resulting in better-informed decisions, stronger plans, and more resilient communities.

Meaningful public participation improves planning by bringing local knowledge and lived experience into decision-making, identifying priorities and potential impacts early, and strengthening trust and accountability. CCRPC is committed to engagement that is inclusive, accessible, transparent, and responsive, with particular attention to reducing barriers to participation, reaching communities historically underrepresented in planning processes, and demonstrating how community input informs decisions.

Purpose

This Public Participation Plan & Toolkit (PPP) establishes CCRPC's framework for public participation across the organization's planning and project work. It describes how CCRPC will provide the public with timely information about regional planning activities and meaningful opportunities to participate in plans, projects, and policy development.

Throughout this Plan, **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 have been historically underrepresented in planning processes.

This Plan provides CCRPC staff and project partners with practical guidance, tools, and resources for designing and implementing engagement throughout the project lifecycle. Rather than prescribing a single approach, it aims to help users determine the appropriate level and methods of public participation based on a project's purpose, potential impacts, applicable requirements, and the communities affected.

This Plan supports compliance with applicable federal and state public participation requirements while advancing CCRPC's organizational commitment to equitable planning and community engagement. Developed collaboratively by CCRPC staff, the Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC), and community partners, it builds on organizational experience, community feedback, current research, and lessons learned from planning projects across Chittenden County. It is intended to be a living document and will be updated as practices, community needs, and legal requirements evolve.

Plan Framework & How to Use this Plan

This Public Participation Plan & Toolkit establishes CCRPC's approach to public participation and provides practical guidance for putting that approach into practice. Part One is intended for community members, CCRPC staff, and project partners who want to understand CCRPC's approach to public participation and opportunities to get involved. Part Two is primarily intended for CCRPC staff and project partners responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating community engagement.

The Plan & Toolkit is organized in two parts:

> **Part 1: 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 2: 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.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this plan, CCRPC uses the term *Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs)* rather than *stakeholders*. While *stakeholder* is commonly used in planning and public engagement, 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.

PART ONE: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Part 1 describes the foundations of public participation at CCRPC, including the requirements and organizational commitments that guide CCRPC's work, the ways community members can participate in planning and decision-making, and the principles that shape CCRPC's approach to community engagement.

Foundations of This Plan

Public participation is fundamental to CCRPC's work and is supported by federal requirements, state policy, regional planning goals, and CCRPC's organizational commitments. Together, these frameworks establish both the minimum requirements for public participation and CCRPC's broader commitment to engagement that is meaningful, inclusive, and accessible.

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.

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 and equitable 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 Plan identifies reducing barriers, strengthening relationships, improving accessibility, and creating meaningful opportunities to participate as important components of equitable regional planning.

See Appendix H: Legal Regulations & Requirements for additional information about the federal and state requirements that apply to CCRPC's public participation processes.

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. Some of this work is ongoing, while other activities occur through specific plans and projects. Opportunities for public participation vary depending on the activity.

The following provides an overview of CCRPC's major recurring plans and programs and how the public can participate.

Major Plans & Programs

ECOS Regional Plan & Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
The ECOS Regional Plan establishes a long-term vision, goals, and strategies for Chittenden County and addresses topics including land use, housing, transportation, energy, economic development, natural resources, emergency management, and climate resilience. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), incorporated into the ECOS Plan, establishes the region's long-range transportation priorities and guides future transportation investments. Regional Plan development includes opportunities for participation beginning early in the planning process and continuing throughout plan development.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) establishes regional economic development priorities and strategies for Chittenden, Franklin, and Grand Isle Counties. It identifies economic conditions, opportunities, and challenges and provides a framework for coordinating investments and actions related to housing, workforce, infrastructure, business development, community development, and other factors that support the regional economy.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identifies transportation projects and programs expected to receive federal funding in Chittenden County over a four-year period, as well as other regionally significant transportation projects. The TIP identifies anticipated funding and schedules for these investments and is updated regularly to reflect changes in project development and funding. TIP revisions are governed by CCRPC's TIP Amendment Policy in Appendix I.

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.

Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)
The Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP) establishes regional energy goals, targets, policies, and strategies for reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and increasing renewable energy generation. It also identifies areas that may be suitable or unsuitable for different types of renewable energy development and provides a framework for municipal and regional energy planning.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) identifies the planning projects and activities CCRPC will undertake during the fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30. It includes regional planning activities as well as projects completed with municipalities and partner organizations.

Other Planning Projects
In addition to these recurring plans and programs, CCRPC conducts transportation studies, municipal planning projects, housing and economic development initiatives, 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, or other technical assistance.

Summary of Public Participation Policies for Plan / Program Adoption

Plan / Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Public Comment Period
ECOS Regional Plan & Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	Two or more public hearings are held for proposed Regional Plan. Public can comment at TAC, LRPC and Board meetings, as well as via mail, email or phone.	Regional Plan: 30 Days as per 24 V.S.A. § 4348 and Title 23 U.S.C. Section 134 and 23 CFR Part 450.316 MTP: 25 Days
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	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 before submission to EDA, per 13 CFR § 303.6.
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	The public may comment at TAC and Board meetings and via mail, email, or phone.	25 Days
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	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.	45 Days as per Title 23 U.S.C. Section 134 and 23 CFR Part 450.316
Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)	The EEP is incorporated into the ECOS Regional Plan and is considered through the Regional Plan public hearing and adoption process.	30 days as part of the Regional Plan adoption process.
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Public can comment at TAC, PAC and Board meetings, as well as via mail, email or phone.	25 Days

Summary of Public Participation Policies for Plan / Program Amendments

Plan / Program Amendments	Public Meetings	Public Comment Period
ECOS Regional Plan & Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	Two or more public hearings held for proposed Regional Plan amendment. Public hearing for major MTP amendments. No meeting required for minor amendments.	Regional Plan: 30 Days MTP: 25 days for major amendments.
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)	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, per 13 CFR § 303.6.
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	See Appendix I for details.	25 Days for major amendments

Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Public hearing for major amendments.	45 Days
Enhanced Energy Plan (EEP)	Amendments made as part of the ECOS Regional Plan follow the Regional Plan amendment process.	30 days as part of the Regional Plan amendment process.
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Public hearing for major amendments. No meeting required for minor amendments.	25 Days

The requirements above are **minimum participation requirements**. CCRPC may provide additional opportunities for engagement based on the scope and potential impacts of a plan or project, the communities affected, and the engagement needs identified through the process described in this PPP.

CCRPC Board & Committees

CCRPC's Board and committees provide ongoing opportunities to learn about regional planning issues and provide input. Meetings are open to the public and include opportunities for public comment. Agendas, meeting materials, minutes, recordings when available, and information about how to participate are posted on the CCRPC website.

CCRPC committee meetings are typically held in a hybrid format to support participation. Meeting formats may vary; current participation information is provided with each meeting notice. For current meeting dates, formats, agendas, materials, and participation information, visit the CCRPC website: ccrpcvt.org/committees

CCRPC Committees	Role	Meetings
CCRPC 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).
Board Development Committee	Supports Board effectiveness through member recruitment, orientation, training, and governance practices.	Meets on a semi-annual basis or as needed.
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's 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 Committee	Acts on behalf of the Board between meetings and provides oversight of organizational administration, policy, and strategic direction.	Regular meetings are held at 5:30 PM on the first Wednesday 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.

Finance Committee	Reviews budgets, financial policies, audits, and fiscal performance.	Meets on a quarterly basis or as needed.
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.
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.	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)		
Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities (O&D) Transportation Committee	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 rom disasters.	Meets quarterly (March, June, September, & December) at 9:00 AM on the third Wednesday of the month.

Public Meetings and Vermont Open Meeting Law

Meetings of the CCRPC Board and its committees are conducted in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A. §§ 310–314). The law establishes requirements for public notice and agendas, access to meetings, opportunities for public comment, meeting minutes, and other procedures intended to ensure that the work of public bodies is open and accessible to the public. Meeting agendas, materials, and information about how to participate are available on CCRPC's website.

How to Get Involved

CCRPC encourages everyone with an interest in regional planning to participate. You do not need to be a planning professional or a member of a CCRPC committee to provide input.

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 walk 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.

Sign up to receive updates
Stay informed on the latest regional planning information by signing up to receive 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

Join 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.

CCRPC's Approach to Community Engagement

Moving Beyond Traditional Public Participation

For many years, public participation has relied on a familiar set of tools, including public hearings, open houses, advisory committees, and written comment periods. While these methods remain important—and in some cases are required by law—in their traditional forms, they often reach those who have the time, knowledge, and resources to engage and may not reflect the opinions of the diversity of people affected by a decision. Work schedules, childcare responsibilities, transportation access and cost, language differences, disabilities, internet access, unfamiliarity with government processes, or simply not feeling welcome can all create barriers to participation.

Traditional engagement also tends to occur late in the decision-making process. When community members feel their input cannot meaningfully influence an outcome, participation declines, trust erodes, and engagement becomes viewed as a procedural requirement rather than a genuine opportunity to shape decisions.

Meaningful engagement requires a different approach. Rather than expecting people to come to CCRPC, the organization strives to meet people where they are. This means engaging people in places they already gather, partnering with trusted community organizations, offering multiple ways to participate, reducing barriers to engagement, and creating opportunities for involvement early and throughout a project. Using the right engagement strategies given a project's purpose, potential impacts, and the communities affected ensures that the people most affected by a decision have opportunities to shape it.

Trends in Community Engagement

Community engagement has evolved significantly in recent years in response to changing public expectations, advances in technology, the normalization of virtual and hybrid engagement, and a growing emphasis on equity and inclusion. A 2025 report from Social Pinpoint (now Social Point), a community engagement platform used by public agencies and other organizations, provides a useful snapshot of these changes. The report draws on a 2024 survey of 601 community engagement practitioners conducted in partnership with organizations including the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Australasia, the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, Municipal World, and the Transportation Research Board. Respondents included local and state government staff, MPOs, transportation agencies, nonprofits, and consultants. The report identifies several trends shaping current community engagement practice:

- Combining in-person and virtual engagement opportunities.
- Building relationships before and beyond individual projects, moving beyond one-time public meetings.
- Partnering with trusted community organizations and community leaders.
- Offering multiple ways to participate to reduce barriers and reach broader audiences.
- Increasing transparency about how public input influences decisions and moving toward shared decision-making.
- Using technology to expand participation while recognizing that digital engagement should complement (not replace) in-person engagement.

The report also identified distrust in government, lack of time, and limited awareness of engagement opportunities as the top barriers to meaningful participation, cited across all community members. For engagement practitioners, the greatest challenges were limited funding, tight project timelines, and community distrust, making it difficult to build the long-term relationships that meaningful engagement requires.

Certain groups, including people with language access or communication needs, older adults, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, young people, low(er)-income residents, and communities of color continue to be most underrepresented in public decision-making. These findings reinforce the importance of a comprehensive, relationship-based approach to community engagement.

Guiding Principles

CCRPC uses the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values as the foundation for its approach to community engagement. These principles recognize that meaningful participation improves planning outcomes and strengthens public trust.

Public participation at CCRPC:

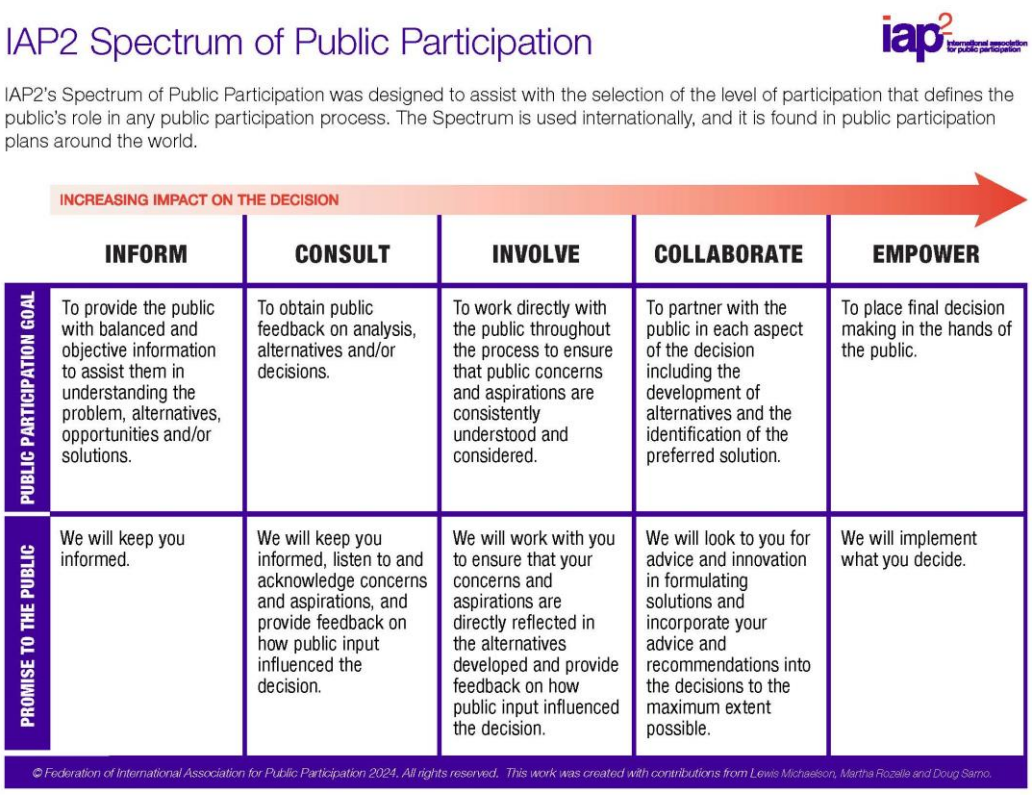
- is based on the belief that **those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.**
- includes the premise that **the public's contribution will influence the decision.**
- promotes sustainable decisions by **recognizing and communicating the needs and interest of all participants**, including decision makers.
- seeks out and **facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision**.
- **seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.**
- **provides participants with the information they need to participate** in a meaningful way.
- **communicates to participants how their input affected the decision**.

The Spectrum of Public Participation

The Spectrum of Public Participation, adapted from IAP2, identifies five levels of public participation, each representing a different level of public influence. No single level is inherently better than another. The appropriate level depends on the purpose of the project, the decisions to be made, and the role the public can meaningfully plan.

Inform is the foundation for all CCRPC projects. Regardless of whether a project includes opportunities for public input, CCRPC should provide clear, timely, and accessible information about its work to the people who may be interested in or affected by it. For projects that include public participation beyond Inform, the spectrum provides a framework for determining the appropriate level of public influence, selecting engagement strategies, and setting clear expectations about how public input will be used.

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



IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

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

© Federation of International Association for Public Participation 2024. All rights reserved. This work was created with contributions from Lewis Michaelson, Martha Rozelle and Doug Sarno.

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 for considering 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.

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. • Anticipated 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, in collaboration with the Outreach & Engagement Manager, complete The Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet. • CCRPC's Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) reviews completed PIE worksheets. • The project team develops a Project Scope, Budget & Engagement Plan.
IMPLEMENT	Carry out community engagement.	• Engagement activities are conducted. • 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: The Design stage provides an initial assessment of a project's purpose, anticipated impacts, and likely community engagement needs before the project scope, budget, and engagement approach are established.
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.
- Engagement needs identified during this process are carried forward into project scoping and the Plan stage.

Tools to Use: UPWP Application *[Link]*

The Design stage occurs during the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) application process and continues through CCRPC staff review and project refinement. Municipalities and project partners are asked a small number of high-level questions to establish the project context and anticipated engagement needs:

- **Project Overview**
- **Project Need**
    a. Describe the problem, opportunity, or community need the project intended to address. Why is this project important?
    b. How does the project support your municipality's goals and the goals of the ECOS Regional Plan? As the project been identified in an adopted plan, study, or other planning document?
- **Project Impact**
    a. Who is likely to benefit from or be affected by this project? (For example: nearby residents, businesses, people who walk or bike, older adults, youth, renters, or specific neighborhoods). Are there any groups that may experience unique benefits, burdens, or unintended impacts?
- **Anticipated Engagement Needs**
    a. Will the project require public engagement?
    b. What level of public participation do you anticipate will be appropriate for this project.
    c. Briefly describe what communities/partners should be engaged, and what strategies you might use to ensure engagement. Please note that CCRPC requires the use of the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet at the inception of projects to help determine appropriate engagement level and outreach and engagement considerations.

Projects identified as requiring community engagement move to the Plan stage, where the project team completes the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet and develops a project-specific engagement strategy.

Plan

Purpose: The Plan stage establishes how CCRPC will communicate about a project and, when public participation is needed, how that participation will be designed. All CCRPC projects should plan for clear and transparent communication at the Inform level. Projects that include public participation beyond Inform should complete the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet.

Tasks:

- For all projects, determine what information should be communicated, to whom, when, and how.
- Determine / confirm whether public participation is needed and the appropriate level of participation.
- For projects with public participation beyond Inform, complete the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet ("how to" details below) in collaboration with the Outreach & Engagement Manager.

- Identify who should be engaged, potential barriers to participation, and appropriate engagement strategies.
- Incorporate engagement activities into the project scope, schedule, and budget.
- For more complex projects, develop a project-specific Community Engagement Plan.

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

This chapter provides guidance for completing the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet. Each section below corresponds to a section of the worksheet and includes additional guidance, considerations, and resources to support project planning. The worksheet should be completed early in project development and collaboratively with CCRPC staff, municipal partners, consultants, and other project partners, as appropriate. The level of detail should be proportional to the project's complexity, anticipated impacts, and planned level of public participation.

Plan to Inform – All Projects

Clear and timely information is the foundation of meaningful public participation. Every CCRPC project should consider what people need to know about the work, including projects that do not include opportunities for public input.

Questions to consider:

- **What is the project?** Can it be explained clearly and in plain language?
- **Why is CCRPC doing it?** What problem, need, requirement, or opportunity is driving the work?
- **Who may be affected or interested?** Who needs to know about the project?
- **What is the timeline?** When will key activities, decisions, and opportunities for participation occur?
- **What has already been decided?** Be clear about existing constraints, commitments, requirements, or decisions that are not open for public influence.
- **What could change?** If public input will be sought, clearly identify the decisions or questions where there is an opportunity for influence.
- **What are the potential impacts and tradeoffs?** Share known benefits, burdens, limitations, costs, uncertainties, or competing considerations rather than presenting only the positive aspects of a project.
- **How will people stay informed?** Identify the communication channels that will be used to share project information, materials, updates, participation opportunities, and final decisions.

For projects that remain at the Inform level, use the Communication Channels guidance in Section 7 as needed to develop the project's communication approach. For projects that include public participation beyond Inform, the remaining sections of this chapter provide additional guidance for completing the PIE Worksheet and designing the engagement strategy.

Plan for Public Participation – Projects Beyond Inform

Projects that include public participation beyond the Inform level should complete the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet early in project development and in collaboration with the Outreach & Engagement Manager. 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.

The remainder of this chapter follows the sections of the PIE Worksheet and provides additional guidance, considerations, and resources. The level of detail should be proportional to the project's complexity, anticipated impacts, and planned level of public participation.

Section 1 and 2. Project Information & Summary

Every engagement strategy should begin with a clear understanding of the project, including its constraints. 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. Clearly identifying and communicating what is and is not open for public input helps establish realistic expectations and focuses engagement on decisions where public input can have an impact.

Questions to consider:

- What is the purpose of this project?
- What decision(s) will this project inform?
- Who is the final decision-making body?
- Is the project team aligned on which decisions are open to public input and which are not? What are those decisions, and what role can the public play?
- What decisions have already been made and are not open for reconsideration?
- What constraints (e.g., funding, legal requirements, regulations, adopted plans, technical limitations, schedule) will shape the available options?
- At what points during the project can community input meaningfully influence decisions?
- What commitments can we realistically make to the public about how their input will be used?

Section 3. Project Impacts

Understanding a project's potential impacts is an important step in designing an effective engagement strategy. Considering who may experience a project's benefits and burdens and how those impacts may differ across communities helps identify who should be involved in the planning process and whether additional engagement strategies may be appropriate.

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 (Act 154). Rather than identifying individual people, the law identifies census block groups that meet one or more statutory thresholds related to household income, the proportion of Persons of Color and Indigenous Peoples, or households with limited English proficiency. Projects located

within or affecting these areas should consider whether additional engagement strategies are needed to ensure meaningful participation.

While a detailed environmental benefits and burdens analysis is not typically necessary, projects with the potential to disproportionately affect Environmental Justice Focus Populations or other underserved communities should consider whether additional outreach, partnerships, language access services, stipends, or other engagement strategies are needed to support meaningful participation. Consider who may be affected, even if they are not located within the project area.

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

Section 4. 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?
- **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:** Are there existing partnerships, advisory groups, or previous engagement efforts that should inform the decision?

In general, projects with greater potential impacts, higher levels of public interest, or more opportunities for community influence warrant higher levels of public participation.

Section 5. Learn Before You Engage

Before asking community members for input, take time to understand what is already known about the project and community. Review previous plans and engagement efforts to identify existing recommendations and concerns, who has participated, and whose perspectives may be missing. 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.

CCRPC's Chittenden County Engagement Tracker can help with this review. The interactive database includes community engagement reports and other documents informed by engagement in Chittenden County since 2020. Project teams can use the Tracker to identify previous community feedback, learn from related engagement efforts, and avoid asking communities to provide the same input repeatedly.

Additional Resources

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

Section 6. Identify Interested & Affected Parties (IAPs)

An effective engagement strategy begins with a clear understanding of who needs to be involved and why. This step is often overlooked, with IAP lists limited to broad categories such as "residents," "businesses," or "community organizations." Instead, be as specific as possible before selecting engagement methods or scheduling activities. Consider the individuals, communities, organizations, and institutions that may be affected by the project, bring relevant knowledge or lived experience, influence project outcomes, or help connect the project team with others who should be involved.

When identifying IAPs:

- Start with those most likely to experience the projects benefits, burdens, or other impacts.
- Consider who lives, works, learns, recreates, or regularly travels through or is otherwise connected to the project area.
- Identify people with lived experience, local knowledge, or technical expertise that could strengthen the project.
- Consider communities that have historically been underrepresented or excluded from similar planning efforts, including Environmental Justice Focus Populations identified in Section 3.
- Identify organizations that work with or serve affected communities, as well as trusted community leaders, organizations, and messengers.
- Consider where community members already gather, build relationships, or receive information.
- Identify decision-makers, agencies, and other partners that should be involved, including existing committees, advisory groups, or partnerships.
- Consider completing an IAP mapping exercise *[Link]* with the project team to identify existing relationships, gaps, and opportunities to work with trusted community partners.

[Call Out Box] IAPs and Partners to Consider

Depending on the project, consider the following. Do not limit IAPs to people or organizations located within the project boundary; consider who may be affected by, use, have an interest in, or bring relevant knowledge to the project, regardless of where they are located.

- **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.

The Interested & Affected Parties and Community Partners table in the Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet is intended to move beyond simply listing stakeholders. For each IAP or community, identify why they should be engaged, how they may be affected, what role they could play, potential barriers to participation, and existing relationships or trusted partners that may help support engagement. The more specific this information is, the easier it will be to develop an effective engagement strategy.

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.

Section 7. Engagement Strategies

Once you have identified the appropriate level of public participation, the next step is to select engagement methods that support your project goals and provide meaningful opportunities for participation.

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 is determine by how a method is designed and how much influence participants have, not the method itself. For example, an open house could be used primarily to share information, to gather feedback on alternatives, or to 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. Select a combination based on the project goals, IAPs, barriers to participation, available resources, and decisions open to public influence.

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
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
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.	Consult-Involve
Storytelling & Lived Experience	Invite people to share experiences or stories that help the project team understand how an issue affects their lives or community.	Consult-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
Community & Participatory Mapping	Invite participants to identify assets, concerns, experiences, or opportunities directly on a map.	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
Public Meetings, Open Houses & Community Workshops	Bring people together to learn, ask questions, discuss issues, provide feedback, or explore alternatives.	Inform-Involve
Walkshops & Site-Based Engagement	Engage participants in the project area to discuss conditions, experiences, opportunities, and challenges in place.	Consult-Involve
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
Participatory Budgeting	Give community members direct authority to determine how designated public funds are allocated.	Empower
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 as a regional planning agency and MPO, 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.

Refine Your Engagement Approach: Best Practices to Consider

Research consistently shows that successful engagement depends less on the specific methods used and more on how those methods are planned, communicated, and facilitated. The considerations below reflect current research as well as lessons learned from CCRPC projects. While not every consideration will apply to every project, they should be reviewed when developing an engagement plan.

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 in the process. Be honest about what can and cannot change. Rather than asking for feedback simply because a meeting is expected, design each engagement activity around a specific purpose and clearly communicate how participants' input will be used. Afterward, close the loop by reporting back on what was heard, what changed as a result, and what happens next. People are far more likely to participate again when they understand that their time and perspectives mattered.

Build Relationships and Partner with Trusted Community Organizations

Meaningful engagement is built on relationships, not just outreach. Community organizations, schools, libraries, cultural organizations, faith communities, and other trusted partners often have relationships, credibility, and local knowledge that government agencies do not. Whenever possible, engage these partners early—not simply to advertise a meeting, but to understand community priorities, identify barriers, test ideas, and shape the engagement process itself. In some cases, it may make more sense for a trusted community organization to host a conversation than for CCRPC to lead it. When organizations or community members contribute significant time or expertise, consider compensating them in accordance with CCRPC's Stipend Policy.

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, school open houses, 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

An open invitation does not always create an equitable opportunity to participate. Consider the practical, cultural, and institutional barriers that may prevent people from engaging, and build accommodations into the engagement plan and project budget whenever possible. Depending on the project, this may include providing interpretation or translated materials, selecting transit-accessible locations, offering virtual participation, providing food or childcare, scheduling events outside traditional business hours, or offering stipends for participants or community partners.

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

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, online surveys, interviews, or simply stopping by a table at a community event. Offer multiple ways to participate throughout the project so people can engage in the manner that is most comfortable and convenient for them. Don't be afraid to move beyond traditional 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 to a project, including knowledge of regulations, funding, design, data analysis, and planning processes. But that is only one form of expertise.

Residents are experts in their own communities. They understand daily routines, neighborhood history, cultural traditions, informal gathering places, community relationships, and lived experiences in ways that reports, datasets, and site visits cannot capture. Approach engagement with curiosity and humility, recognizing community members as partners rather than audiences. Instead of asking people to react to a nearly finished proposal, invite them to help define the problem, identify opportunities, and share the local knowledge that can strengthen project outcomes.

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, what people value, who is already bringing people together, and what strengths can be built upon. An asset-based approach recognizes that every community 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 civic engagement competes with family time, sports, entertainment and social events, and countless other priorities. To encourage participation, create experiences that are welcoming, interactive, and worth participants' time.

Whenever possible, replace long presentations with conversations. Use visual activities, mapping exercises, storytelling, or hands-on design activities that encourage participation from people with different communication styles and levels of familiarity with planning. Build in time for people to get to know one another, share ideas informally, and connect with neighbors. Consider providing food, welcoming children and families, and choosing familiar, comfortable, or even unexpected spaces that make people feel at ease rather than intimidated.

The best engagement builds relationships. When people leave feeling welcomed, connected to their neighbors, and glad they came, they are far more likely to participate again and remain involved in shaping their community.

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

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

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.

Section 8. Accessibility

Identify potential barriers to participation during project planning so that appropriate supports can be incorporated into the project scope, schedule, and budget. Consider language access, disability access,

transportation, childcare, food, scheduling, virtual participation, participant compensation, and other needs identified through the PIE Worksheet.

At this stage, the project team does not need to determine every logistical detail. Identify anticipated needs, applicable CCRPC policies and resources, and any additional information that should be gathered from IAPs or community partners. See the **Implement** chapter for guidance on addressing common barriers and implementing accessibility and participation supports.

Section 9. Resources & Budget

The Project Impact & Engagement Worksheet includes a budget planning table and current cost estimates for comment engagement needs. Use these resources early in project development to ensure the engagement strategy is reflected in the project scope and budget. Not every project will require every expense; costs should reflect the project's level of participation, intended IAPs, and planned engagement activities.

Start with the engagement strategy rather than a predetermined engagement budget. Consider the full resources needed to carry out the strategy, including preparation, outreach, accessibility, implementation, documentation, evaluation, and follow-up. Budget for the relationships and support needed to carry out meaningful engagement, not only individual meetings or activities, and include a reasonable contingency for additional outreach, accessibility needs, or other expenses that may arise as the project evolves. The Outreach & Engagement Manager should be included in this process as appropriate and is available to help project teams identify resource needs, develop engagement budgets, and address questions.

When developing an engagement budget, consider:

- **Staff time:** Planning, project management, facilitation, outreach, communications, documentation, and follow-up.
- **Community partnerships:** Community liaisons, contracts with community organizations, outreach support, or cultural advisors. See CCRPC's Community Liaison Policy *[Link]* for details.
- **Accessibility & language access:** Including interpretation, translation, ADA accommodations, accessible meeting spaces, and virtual participation tools. See CCRPC's Language Access Plan *[Link]* for details.
- **Outreach & communications:** Printing, mailings, multilingual materials, signage, social media advertising, website updates, and media outreach.
- **Participant support:** food, childcare, transportation assistance, stipends, gift cards, or other incentives. See CCRPC's Stipend Policy *[Link]* for details.
- **Engagement activities:** Venue rental, meeting supplies, printed maps, display boards, online engagement platforms, or other interactive materials.
- **Documentation & follow-up:** Engagement summaries, graphic design, photography, report-back materials, and communications about results and next steps.
- **Contingency:** Additional outreach, interpretation, accessibility accommodations, or other unforeseen engagement needs.

[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

Once the Project Impact & Engagement (PIE) Worksheet is complete, share it with the Outreach & Engagement Manager for additional input. The Outreach & Engagement Manager can also be involved in developing the worksheet. The Community Engagement Advisory Committee (CEAC) will also review completed PIE worksheets for 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 more substantial public participation, the project team should consider developing 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. As you develop the plan, build on previous plans and engagement efforts by incorporating relevant community feedback and lessons learned. Consider involving community partners, community liaisons, or other key stakeholders in developing or refining the plan, particularly when identifying affected communities, developing engagement strategies, or selecting engagement methods.

A Community Engagement Plan should be tailored to the needs of the project but should include the following components:

- Project overview, goals, and decision points
- Community engagement goals and desired outcomes
- Project context, history, and relevant previous engagement results
- Interested and affected parties, community partners, and community liaisons
- Level of public participation (IAP2 Spectrum)
- Engagement activities, methods, and timeline
- Communications strategy
- Accessibility and barrier reduction strategies
- Roles and responsibilities
- Budget, staffing, and project schedule
- Key project milestones
- Planning for documentation, reporting back, and evaluation

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 state.
- Document participation and feedback and adjust engagement approach as needed.

Tools to use:

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

Project Materials

Project materials—including flyers, brochures, websites, presentations, surveys, posters, and other outreach materials—should be clear, accessible, and easy to understand. When developing project materials, consider the following:

- Use plain language and avoid technical jargon, acronyms, and unnecessary complexity.
- Explain technical concepts in everyday language.
- Use maps, photographs, diagrams, and other visuals to communicate complex information.
- Keep materials focused on the decisions participants can influence and the purpose of engagement.
- Develop materials that are compatible with screen readers and other accessibility tools.
- Translate materials when appropriate in accordance with the CCRPC Language Access Plan.
- Include language access statements on all public-facing materials.
- When feasible, ask project partners or community members to review materials before they are distributed.

Refer to the CCRPC Language Access Plan *[Link]* for detailed guidance on creating accessible documents, webpages, presentations, translated materials, and language access statements.

Addressing Common Barriers to Engagement

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.

Providing 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.

Providing 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, recommended payment amounts, and payment procedures.

Working with Community Liaisons

Community liaisons are trusted community members who help CCRPC build relationships, organize engagement events, recruit participants, facilitate conversations, and ensure engagement strategies are culturally appropriate. They should be involved as early as possible in project planning, particularly when engaging communities that have historically been underrepresented or have limited trust in government. Refer to the CCRPC Community Liaison Policy *[Link]* for guidance on selecting and working with community liaisons, recommended rates, contact information, and contract and invoice templates.

Transportation Support

Transportation can limit participation, particularly for older adults, people with disabilities, lower-income households, and residents 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

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. If transportation remains a barrier, consider whether additional assistance, such as arranging or paying for rideshare services, Uber/Lyft, or other transportation options, may be appropriate. 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.

Providing Childcare at Meetings

For many parents and caregivers, childcare responsibilities are one of the biggest barriers to participation. When engaging families is important to a project's success, consider ways to make participation easier for parents and caregivers.

One approach is to host engagement activities at child-friendly locations, such as libraries, schools, or community centers that already have spaces, toys, or activities for children. Consider advertising the event as family-friendly or kid-friendly, providing simple activities for children, and assigning a staff member or volunteer to help supervise the activity area when appropriate.

For projects where dedicated childcare may be beneficial, plan for it early. Include childcare as a potential project expense, advertise it in outreach materials, and ask participants to RSVP and indicate whether they will need childcare, including the number and ages of children. This information can help determine whether childcare is warranted and what level of support is needed.

If dedicated childcare providers will be used, coordinate with the project manager early in the planning process. CCRPC is continuing to develop procedures related to childcare, including any applicable contracting, insurance, and liability considerations.

Providing Food at Meetings

Food brings people 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 (vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free, dairy-free, nut allergies) and preferences in advance.
- Clearly label ingredients and common allergens.
- Provide culturally appropriate options and be mindful of religious dietary practices, including halal, kosher, vegetarian, gluten free and vegan options.

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.

Working Across Cultures

When engaging with diverse communities, understanding cultural nuances is key to building trust and creating connections. Effective cross-cultural communication requires being mindful of differences in customs, values, and traditions, as they can significantly influence participation. Considerations to keep in mind include:

- **Social Norms and Etiquette:** Expectations around greetings, eye contact, personal space, gender interactions, and other social customs vary across cultures. For example, some participants may prefer not to shake hands, and in some communities, gender norms may influence who participates in discussions or who is most appropriate to facilitate conversations. When in doubt, follow the lead of community members, ask respectful questions, and work with local partners to understand cultural norms that may influence participation.
- **Religious considerations:** Religious observances, such as the call to prayer in Islam or the Sabbath in Judaism, can affect participation. Being mindful of religious schedules [see CCRPC's Religions and Cultural Days of Significance Calendar], offering prayer rooms, or adjusting event times can help promote inclusivity and avoid discomfort during fasting or prayer.
- **Dietary considerations:** Be aware of dietary needs, offering halal options for Muslims, kosher for Jewish communities, and vegetarian or vegan choices for Hindus and Buddhists. Local leaders or cultural representatives can guide you in making appropriate offerings.

- **Building trust:** Some communities, such as immigrant and refugee communities, may be wary of interacting with government officials. Partnering with organizations that serve these communities—such as Spanish-speaking churches, community development corporations, ethnic grocery stores, or local community groups—and empowering the leaders of these organizations to collect feedback can often be a more successful way to reach low-trust communities.
- **Communication and Decision-Making:** Communication styles and decision-making practices vary across cultures. Some people may be uncomfortable speaking in large groups, disagreeing publicly, interrupting others, or speaking before elders or authority figures. In some communities, important decisions are made collectively or with significant input from family members, elders, or community leaders. Offering multiple ways to participate—such as small-group discussions, one-on-one conversations, written comments, or anonymous feedback—and allowing time for reflection and discussion can create more comfortable and meaningful opportunities for participation.

When you're unsure, approach the situation with curiosity and cultural humility. When possible, work with local partners and community members to understand the cultural considerations, preferences, and engagement approaches that will be most appropriate for the communities you hope to engage.

Accessible Meetings

Open Meeting Law

Some engagement activities may also constitute meetings of a CCRPC or municipal public body and therefore be subject to Vermont's Open Meeting Law. When applicable, project teams must account for Open Meeting Law requirements when planning the activity, including requirements related to public notice and agendas, meeting access and participation, minutes, and recordings. Not every engagement activity is subject to the law; interviews, focus groups, pop-up events, workshops, and other project engagement activities may fall outside its requirements depending on how they are structured and who is participating. If you are unsure whether the Open Meeting Law applies, consult the CCRPC Communications Manager before scheduling the activity.

Meeting Date & Location

The timing and location of an engagement activity often determine who is able to participate. When selecting a date and location:

- Avoid major religious and cultural holidays by consulting the CCRPC Cultural Days of Significance Calendar.
- Choose locations that are familiar, welcoming, ADA accessible, and easy to reach. Libraries, schools, community centers, parks, farmers markets, neighborhood events, food distribution sites, and places of worship may be more accessible and welcoming than traditional meeting rooms.
- Whenever possible, meet people where they already gather rather than expecting them to come to a government office.
- Consider whether multiple meeting times, weekend events, or drop-in formats would better serve the intended audience.
- Confirm that entrances, restrooms, seating arrangements, and other meeting facilities are physically accessible and accommodate mobility devices.
- Ensure presentation materials and activities are accessible.
- Arrange interpretation, captioning, assistive listening devices, or other accommodations as needed.

- Clearly tell participants how to request additional accommodations in advance.

Guidelines for Accessible & Equitable Online Meetings

The following provides some advice on how to equitably engage with remote participation:

- People should be able to see the faces of people in the room. At a minimum the core team should be visible; if possible show everyone that's in the room.
- Explain the rules of engagement.
    - Acknowledge the use of potentially unfamiliar technology
    - Explain what that means and what is being done to ensure everyone can participate
    - Let people know if the meeting will be recorded
    - Inform people how they can communicate, how their communications will be addressed, and when
    - Let people know rules and etiquette
    - How to identify yourself
    - How to mute your device
    - How to pose/add a question
    - How to vote
- Foster an engaging meeting
    - Make sure the presenter and presentation can be seen
    - Make sure presentation is readable, even on a phone
    - Allow for people to leave comments and questions in real time
    - Make sure people can view what is being posted
    - Assign someone the role of monitoring and helping to prioritize questions
    - Incorporate interactive exercises
- Formally end the meeting so people know they can sign off.

Facilitating Meetings

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.

How to Create an Agenda

A well-designed agenda helps meetings stay focused, makes the best use of participants' time, and creates opportunities for meaningful discussion and participation.

- **Agree on the aims** for the meeting and then collect agenda items from the group, preferably in advance.
- **Estimate the time needed for each item.** If you have more agenda items than fit into the available time, think about priorities for this meeting – what could be tackled another time or in separate working groups?
- **Think about effective facilitation techniques** for complex or controversial topics (e.g., starting with paired chats to explore feelings).

- **Work out what order to tackle agenda items in.** Often, it's best to deal with difficult items after the group has warmed up but before people get tired. By alternating short and long items you can give the group a sense of progress. A common way of starting a meeting is to recap recent events or the last meeting.
- **How should the meeting start?** Will you have introductions, a check-in or warm-up activity?
- **How will the meeting end?** Can you think of a closing activity? Could you plan an evaluation of the meeting near the end so you can learn for next time?
- **Plan in breaks,** especially for meetings longer than 1½ hours.
- **Have a back-up plan.** Ask yourself what you can cut from the agenda, or trim down if anything runs over your proposed time. Have some suggestions up your sleeve.
- **Write up the proposed agenda** where everyone will be able to see it (on a whiteboard or flipchart, for example) or make copies to give to everyone.

Tips for Creating a Productive Discussion

Begin each meeting by clearly explaining its purpose, what participants can influence, and how their input will be used. 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:

- Ask open-ended and clarifying questions rather than leading participants toward a particular answer.
- 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, small groups, sticky notes, polls, etc.) to accommodate different communication styles and comfort levels.
- Allow time for reflection. Silence often gives participants the space they need to think before responding.
- 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.
- 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 sharing their time, expertise, and lived experience.

Evaluate

Purpose: The Evaluate stage focuses on understanding the effectiveness of community engagement, documenting results, and identifying lessons for future work.
Tasks:

- Evaluate engagement activities and outcomes.
- Document participation, community feedback, and how feedback informed the project.
- Complete engagement-related project reporting and closeout.
- Carry community feedback and lessons learned forward into future CCRPC work.

This chapter provides guidance for evaluating engagement throughout the project lifecycle and at project closeout. Using the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) Getting to Results framework, evaluation supports project reporting, organizational learning, continuous improvement, and CCRPC's state and federal reporting requirements.

Getting to Results Framework

The Getting to Results Framework organizes evaluation around three questions:

How Much Did We Do?
Document the quantity of engagement activities conducted.
Examples include:

- Number and type of engagement activities
- Number of participants
- Communities and organizations engaged
- Languages offered
- Community partners and liaisons involved

How Well Did We Do?
Assess the quality of the engagement process.
Consider questions such as:

- Were the intended audiences reached?
- Were barriers to participation effectively addressed?
- Were accessibility and language access needs met?
- Which engagement methods were most effective?
- What worked well and what could be improved?

Is Anyone Better Off?
Evaluate how community input was considered and how it informed the project.
Consider questions such as:

- How did community input influence project recommendations or decisions?
- How were significant comments, concerns, or recommendations considered and addressed?
- Were new issues, priorities, or opportunities identified?
- Were participants informed about project outcomes and next steps?
- What lessons should inform future projects?

Tracking Engagement & Project Closeout

Consistent documentation throughout a project makes it easier to meet reporting requirements, understand how community input influenced the project, follow up with participants, and carry what was learned into future work. Establish a simple system at the beginning of the project and update as engagement occurs.

Track Engagement Throughout the Project

Consider maintaining an Engagement Activity Log that captures, as appropriate:

- Event date
- Engagement activity and method
- Intended audience and approximate number of participants
- Communities, populations, and IAP groups engaged.
- Staff, community partners, community liaisons, interpreters, and other collaborators involved.
- Key feedback received, questions, concerns, or recommendations.
- Barriers to participation and supports provided (language access services, stipends, transportation assistance, childcare, or other accommodations).
- Follow-up needs or commitments

If collecting demographic information from participants, see Collecting Demographic Information section below.

Keep supporting documentation, such as meeting notes, survey results, comment forms, photographs, or recordings, as appropriate. Community feedback should be documented in a way that allows the project team to identify key themes, areas of agreement or disagreement, new issues, and how input informed project decisions.

At Project Closeout

At the conclusion of the project, use the engagement documentation collected throughout engagement to complete three steps:

1. **Complete Project Reporting**
   Final project reports should document, as appropriate:
   - Engagement activities and methods: What engagement activities were conducted and what methods were used.
   - Who was engaged: Approximate number of participants and the communities, populations, and stakeholder groups engaged.
   - Partners and collaborators: Community partners, community liaisons, interpreters, and other collaborators involved in engagement.

- Barriers and accessibility supports: Barriers identified and strategies used to address them, such as stipends, language access services, transportation assistance, childcare, or other accommodations.
- Community feedback and influence: Key themes from community feedback, how significant comments or recommendations were considered, and how input informed project recommendations, decisions, or outcomes.
- Lessons learned: What worked well, what could be improved, and recommendations 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 form, as appropriate. Capture key themes, concerns, priorities, recommendations, and other information that may be relevant to future CCRPC work.

   Feedback with broader relevance should be shared across program areas and revisited when related projects or decisions arise. Carrying feedback forward helps CCRPC build on what communities have already shared and reduces the need to repeatedly ask the same questions.
3. **Report Back to Participants**
   Communicate project outcomes to participants and project partners, as appropriate. Follow-up may include:
   - A summary of what was heard
   - Project results, recommendations, or final materials
   - How community input influenced the project
   - Explanation of why significant recommendations could not be incorporated
   - Responses to outstanding questions or commitments
   - Information about next steps or future opportunities to participate

   When possible, plan for follow-up as a part of the engagement process rather than waiting for project closeout. Timely communication demonstrates how participant contributions were used and helps maintain relationships beyond the life of an individual 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.

Collecting Demographic Information

Collecting self-reported demographic information can help evaluate whether engagement efforts reached the intended communities and identify gaps in participation. Because demographic questions may discourage participation at times, collect only the information needed to evaluate the engagement effort. Clearly explain why

the information is being collected, make all questions optional, and, when appropriate, collect demographic information anonymously or separately from project feedback to protect participant privacy.

When collecting demographic information:

- Explain why the information is being collected.
- Make all questions optional.
- Collect only information that is needed to evaluate the engagement effort.
- When appropriate, collect demographic information anonymously or separately from project feedback.
- Protect participant privacy and communicate how the information will be used.

When appropriate, consider collecting:

- Age
- Race or ethnicity
- Primary language
- ZIP code
- Housing status (renter or homeowner)
- Gender identity

Compare participant demographics to the intended audience or affected community to help assess whether additional outreach strategies may be needed.

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 includes 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

- Project Name:
- Municipality/Project Area:
- Project Manager:
- Project Partners (if applicable):
- Anticipated Project Timeline:

Section 2. Project Summary

- What is the project trying to accomplish?
- What decisions will this project inform, and who will make those decisions?
- What decisions have already been made or are otherwise constrained?
- What parts of the project are open to public input?
- What are the major project milestones or decision points?

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. 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 6. 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 underrepresented in similar processes. Consider organizations, community leaders, liaisons, or other partners that could help build relationships, reach IAPs, or support engagement.

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
- ❑ 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	
Interpretation & Communication Access	Spoken-language interpretation, ASL interpretation, CART or other communication access 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 and evaluated throughout the project. Review the Evaluate chapter of the Public Participation Plan & Toolkit for CCRPC's documentation and project closeout requirements. Consider:

- Who will be responsible for documenting engagement activities and community feedback throughout the project?
- What systems or tools will be used to consistently track the required information?
- When will documentation occur, and how will time for documentation and project closeout be incorporated into the project scope, schedule, and budget?
- How will participant feedback, project decisions, and information about how community input influenced the project be organized so that the project team can report back to participants?
- Who will be responsible for completing the final engagement documentation and project evaluation at project closeout?

Next Steps

Once this worksheet is complete:

1. Review it with the Outreach & Engagement Manager.
2. The Outreach & Engagement Manager will 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	$25–$40/person	Simple meeting meal; include delivery, tax, dietary accommodations, etc.
Childcare	$250–$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–$250/event	Prioritize free community-based locations when appropriate; ~$150 is a reasonable placeholder when rental is needed.
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

Appendix C: Tools & Resources Index

Appendix D: Stipend Policy

Appendix E: Community Liaison Policy

Appendix F: Language Access Plan

Appendix G: References & Supporting Resources

Appendix H: Legal Regulations & Requirements

Appendix I: TIP Amendment Policy