Community Engagement Planning Guide

Working toward engaging the Brooklyn Park community in an authentic, equitable and meaningful way

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About this guide

This guide serves as a resource to help staff think through the process of developing a community engagement (i.e. public outreach and participation) plan for City projects (policies, programs, infrastructure development, construction work, etc.) by providing questions and key points for consideration.

What is an engagement plan?

An engagement plan outlines a set of specific outreach and public participation strategies with assigned roles and a timeline for new or reoccurring projects that will impact the community either at the neighborhood or citywide level.

The Community Engagement team can help!

The Community Engagement (CE) team exists to assist all City departments and divisions develop and carry out effective community engagement strategies. Use this resource! Work through the questions outlined in this guide with one or more members of the team.

Step 1: do we need to engage the community?

How do we know if our project needs to incorporate some level of community engagement?

Yes	No	Does our project have potential environmental, economic, safety and/or health impacts on the community?
Yes	No	Have community members voiced interest, concerns or opposition to our project?
Yes	No	Would public participation help our project achieve equitable outcomes for our community members?
Yes	No	Will we be asking the community to provide additional funding for our project (i.e. assessment, tax increase, bond referendum, etc.)?

If the answer to at least one of the above questions is a yes, then contact the CE team. Let's create a plan!

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Step 2: what we know and don't know about our project

Before we begin developing public outreach and participation strategies, let's think through what we know about our project. Skip the questions that do not apply.

Questions to consider

- What does our project seek to do for the community?

- What are the anticipated impacts (both positive and negative) at the neighborhood level? What about at the citywide level?

- What is the current level of community awareness about our project and its impact?

- What have our community engagement efforts looked like in the past for this or similar projects? Were they effective or ineffective?

- What are the possible consequences/outcomes (if any) of not engaging the community?

- How can our project timeline accommodate a community engagement process?

- What information is missing? What is still unknown about our project (i.e. funding, timeline, etc.)?

Step 3: identifying who to engage

Depending on the nature of our project, we will want to develop an understanding of either or both of the following:

- Relationship between the level of project impact community stakeholders experience and their current level of engagement (awareness and involvement) with our project or the City more generally (see illustration 1).

- Relationship between the impacted community stakeholders' influence on project outcomes and their current level of engagement with out project (see illustration 2).

Questions to consider

- Which specific community members/groups will be most impacted by our project?

  - Which groups are already engaged? Which are currently disengaged?

  - Which groups have a high influence on project outcomes? Which groups do we need to empower to have greater influence?

  - Which groups are easy for us to reach? Which are difficult for us to reach?

  - With which groups do we already have built relationships? With which groups do we need to begin developing connections?

- From the impacted community members/groups we identified, which need to be:

  - Provided printed and electronic information about our project?

  - Invited to give input and feedback on one or more aspects of our project?

  - Invited to help shape and/or carry out the community engagement effort?

  - Included in the development and decision making process of our project?

- Which City departments and external partner organizations should we collaborate with for our community engagement efforts to be successful?
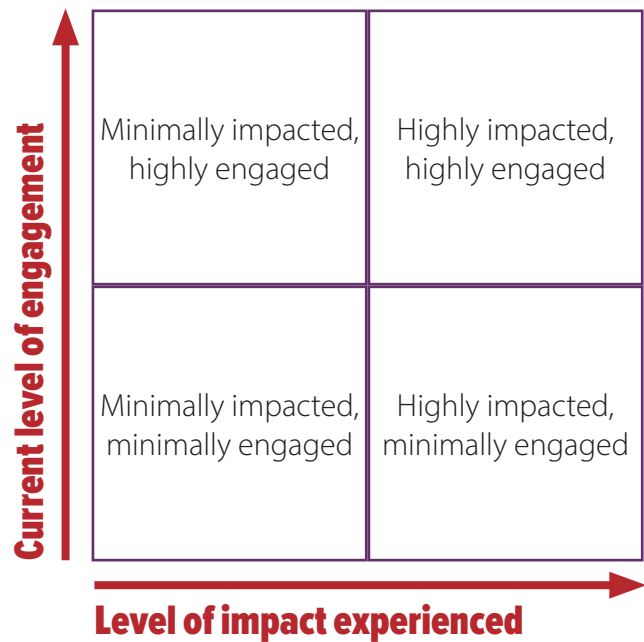
Illustration 1

	Level of impact experienced →
Minimally impacted, highly engaged	Highly impacted, highly engaged
Minimally impacted, minimally engaged	Highly impacted, minimally engaged

Current level of engagement ↑

Level of impact experienced →

Illustration 2

Low influence, highly engaged	High influence, highly engaged
Low influence, minimally engaged	High influence, minimally engaged

Current level of engagement ↑
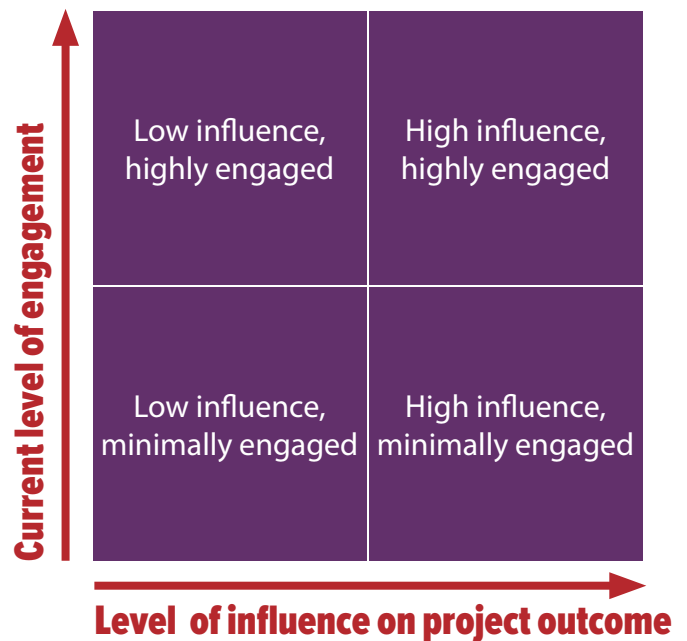
Level of influence on project outcome →

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Step 4: choosing the right community engagement strategies

Our engagement strategies should seek to be dynamic, adaptive and responsive to resident needs and circumstances.

Barriers, challenges and opportunities

- There are transportation, language, technological, institutional and physical barriers that limit access to information and active engagement for socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, community members with disabilities, youth, the elderly, and communities of color.
- We have a culturally and racially diverse community that requires varying methods of information sharing and engagement opportunities. One strategy does not work for all.
- We can leverage existing relationships with community members/groups to reach out to and build new relationships with disengaged and under represented populations.

Setting expectations

We should strive to be transparent about the level of influence and control community members can exercise through their input and involvement on a city project. Set realistic expectations to prevent disappointment and frustration.

Our commitment to the community at each level of participation

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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 recommendation into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

IAP2: Spectrum of Public Participation

Questions to consider

- Which communication outlets should we use? Will these outlets reach the intended community members/groups?
- For public meetings/gatherings, which physical locations/spaces (both indoor and outdoor) will be the most convenient/accessible for community members?
- For in-person outreach, during which times and days of the week will we be best able to reach the intended community groups?
- How will we make sure our engagement efforts are equitable? How can we limit barriers to public participation?

Step 5: what does success look like?

Assessing our efforts is an integral part of improving our outreach and engagement strategies. It helps us to understand what we are doing well and how we can improve. It also keeps us accountable to our selves and the community.

Questions to consider before the project starts

- If our community outreach and engagement efforts are successful, what outcomes will we see?
- What are the specific goals and objectives of our outreach and public participation efforts?
- What are some indicators (what we can see and measure) that let us know that we have achieved our engagement goals?

Assessing our efforts after the project is done

- Based on the goals we set for our outreach efforts at the beginning of this project, which did we meet and which did we not meet?
- For the goals we met, what helped us accomplish them?
- For the goals we did not meet, what could we have done better?

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