The City of SAN DIEGO

Inclusive Public Engagement Guide

November 2025

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LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Dear City of San Diego employees,

We at the City deliver the best results for our communities when we listen to and learn from the diverse perspectives of the people we serve. A history of structural exclusion and individual resource limitations has too often kept some San Diegans from having their voices heard in local decision-making, and we are committed to breaking down those barriers so more residents can participate in shaping the decisions that affect their lives.

The new Inclusive Public Engagement Guide helps put our operating principles—customer service, empowerment and engagement, equity and inclusion, and trust and transparency—into action. It also gives us a framework for more consistent and effective engagement processes while allowing flexibility to meet the unique needs of each City project.

This Guide was created with input from many City departments, community-based organizations, boards and commissions, and community members. By following its best practices, we can build stronger long-term relationships with the people in every neighborhood we serve.

I am committed to continually improving how we connect with our residents. This resource is another tool to make sure every San Diegan has a voice in our work—and that together, we're building a brighter, more inclusive future for our city.

Todd Gloria
Mayor, City of San Diego

ABOUT THE GUIDE

Project Background

The core mission of the City of San Diego (City) is to serve San Diego's public. To support this mission, the City developed the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide (the Guide) to provide staff with best practices for implementing inclusive public outreach and engagement. The goal is to better serve the public, which includes community members, businesses and organizations, by including more voices during City decision-making. By streamlining and enhancing public participation, City decisions can best meet the needs of San Diegans.

The Guide was identified as an implementation action in both the Parks Master Plan and the Climate Resilient SD Plan, which were adopted by the San Diego City Council in 2021. These plans called for consistent and inclusive Citywide public engagement practices.

The Guide builds on existing public participation techniques being used by the City and standardizes how these occur to foster consistency, transparency and inclusivity across City projects.

Input for the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide

In December 2021, the Chollas Creek Coalition - an advocacy coalition comprised of community-based organizations and community members in the Chollas Creek Watershed area - shared their proposed community engagement principles and practices with the City. The principles and practices include integrating community members and community-based organizations in public engagement efforts, providing transparency around the purpose of public engagement and building trust and relationships with community members.

In March 2023, the City published a survey for the public to share their preferences for engaging with the City. The survey closed in December 2024 and captured approximately 150 responses. While the survey was not statistically valid (conclusions cannot be drawn about citywide perceptions), those that did participate shared preferences for small in-person public meetings, community cafes, online surveys and virtual meetings. Participants also noted a desire for the City to be open and responsive in communication channels and to create a transparent decision-making process to build trust with community members.

In 2023, the City also established and met with the Inclusive Public Engagement Focused Discussion Group to inform the Guide. Ten Focused Discussion Group members were selected by the City to reflect a range of neighborhoods, public engagement experience, ages, income and living arrangements. Over the course of several discussions, members shared their lived experiences and perspectives on community engagement to inform the content of the Guide. Specifically, group members provided input about topics such as principles of inclusive public engagement, accessible outreach and engagement techniques and ways the City could measure the success of public engagement.

Summaries from the Focused Discussion Group meetings, including key input from members, can be found below:

- Focused Discussion Group Overview
- Meeting 1: Welcome and Project Overview
- Meeting 2: Participation Challenges and Meaningful Engagement
- Meeting 3: Inclusive Engagement and Planning for Participation
- Meeting 4: Engagement Techniques and Pilot Engagement Activities
- Meeting 5: Reporting Back and Identifying Metrics of Success
- Meeting 6: Engagement Feedback and Lessons Learned

Throughout 2023 and 2024, project staff also met with representatives from City departments and several City working groups, boards, committees and commissions – including the Climate Equity Working Group, Accessibility Advisory Board, Community Planner's Committee and the San Diego Promise Zone – who shared existing challenges and opportunities that they wanted the Guide to address. Specifically, these groups provided input on topics including barriers to participation, who is missing from public participation and effective public participation techniques and approaches.

Through the survey, Focused Discussion Group meetings and stakeholder consultations, project staff identified key themes in the public's preferences for inclusive public engagement. These themes and input informed all sections of the Guide.

The draft Guide was published online on Sept. 10, 2025, and its public review period remained open until Oct. 19, 2025. Each webpage of the Guide included a comment form where users could share suggestions for changes to that page's content. In addition, three workshops were held during September and October 2025 (two in-person and one virtual) to share information about the Guide and gather detailed feedback on barriers to participation and effective engagement techniques. Following the public review period, a Summary of Changes document was created to summarize the themes of the public input received and explain how input was incorporated into the current version of the Guide.
The City Planning Department presented the Guide as an informational item to the City Council Rules Committee on Nov. 19, 2025.

Next steps

Public participation is constantly evolving and can be informed by new best practices, cultural nuances and shifting public needs. The Guide is a living document that can be updated as any needs to refine are identified.

The City also plans to hold educational public workshops in 2026 to provide information about ways to get involved with the City.

Why Inclusive Engagement Matters

City departments work on a variety of projects that address specific issues, achieve particular goals or implement policies. Through inclusive public participation, the public can become better aware of and/or provide input on these projects to share their perspective on how decisions can best reflect their needs and values.

Historically, the City has experienced challenges in garnering broad and continuous participation from people who are representative of the city's demographic diversity. Additionally, some community members have noted barriers that prevent them from meaningfully engaging.

Through inclusive public participation, the City can reduce barriers to engagement, listen and act on community feedback, and make decisions that are better informed by public input. Effective public engagement can lead to better and more sustainable decisions and outcomes as well as improved relationships with the public. Consistent use of the Guide will also allow the City to reduce operational inefficiencies that arise without a consistent public engagement process.

While the public may not agree with every decision the City makes, through inclusive public engagement, people can better understand and respect the process by which decisions are made.

Engagement Principles

The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide introduces engagement principles that will inform the City's engagement approach and provide a foundation for emphasizing participatory decision-making, communication and community capacity.

The engagement principles work together to promote inclusive public engagement and community participation on plans, programs and policies, particularly for people who have historically experienced barriers to public participation.

The City has identified five engagement principles:

Inclusion

Definition	Inclusion accounts for different barriers to participation to promote representation from all demographics in San Diego. Inclusion actively invites and welcomes participation of all people and groups, proactively removing barriers to participation and emphasizing the importance of recognizing, being responsive to and valuing all voices.
Why	The City aspires to foster inclusive engagement, empowering every voice to be heard and valued in shaping the City's future. Inclusion proactively engages all individuals and groups, regardless of circumstances or identities, welcoming their input to ensure that the City makes decisions that are informed by local needs, values and aspirations. Inclusive engagement fosters participation and collaboration among diverse perspectives, knowledge levels and backgrounds.
How	• Reach out to stakeholders who may be impacted by the project. • Employ a variety of engagement techniques to provide different ways to participate. • Design public participation opportunities so they are accessible to diverse audiences. • Communicate in clear and accessible ways.

Building community relationships

Definition	Building relationships involves fostering authentic, sustained connections between City staff and the communities they serve. This principle emphasizes moving beyond transactional interactions to cultivate trust, mutual understanding and accountability over time. It values people's lived experiences, insights and expertise regarding the issues impacting their communities, recognizing that community members uniquely understand their own needs and challenges.
Why	Consistent, long-term and ongoing engagement can foster a sense of mutual understanding and respect. By building and maintaining relationships, public engagement becomes a collaborative effort that builds the public's confidence in inclusive engagement. Community knowledge can uncover important information or identify deficiencies in data, providing insights that expand on technical information so that decision-makers can make the most well-informed decisions for the people they serve.
How	• Publicly recognize the efforts, contributions and achievements of community members and organizations. • Partner with people and groups that have a history and trust in working with the community. • Promote open lines of communication with community members and share relevant information and news about the status of projects. • Provide participation support where appropriate.

Transparency

Definition	Transparency allows San Diegans to easily access information, understand processes and follow the outcome of decisions that are made. It includes clearly articulating engagement goals and summarizing objectives, constraints and reasoning in a clear and accessible manner. It also entails following up with participants in a reasonable and timely manner, reporting back how input was used and providing regular updates on project status.
Why	Openly sharing information and project goals upfront and providing regular updates throughout the engagement process establishes a predictable process that provides the public with an understanding of how input will be used so they can meaningfully engage. When people can see how their input is considered and understand the reasoning behind a decision, it increases the credibility and acceptance of decisions. Even if people disagree, transparency about the project and decision-making process can help clarify how decisions were reached.
How	• Describe how engagement will influence decision-making. • Use clear, simple and inclusive language to describe projects and public input opportunities. • Provide advance notice of engagement opportunities, follow up in a timely manner, and be responsive to reasonable inquiries. • Report back about community input themes, how they were considered in the proposed solutions and why the ultimate decision was made.

Clear communication

Definition	Clear communication delivers information to the public in accessible, understandable and relatable ways. It involves using plain language, avoiding technical terms and jargon, and tailoring messaging and communication channels to reach audiences with varying backgrounds and communication preferences.
Why	Clear communication allows the public to participate effectively. Communicating in a straightforward manner allows people of all backgrounds to participate, including people who may not – and should not be expected to – have specialized knowledge of governmental operations or technical expertise. Clear communication aims to help the public understand decisions being made, what's at stake, how to participate and empowers people to engage constructively in discussions that may affect their lives. Effective project communication incorporates a diversified communication strategy to reach a broad audience.
How	• Use real-life examples, relatable visuals, analogies and stories that resonate with communities. • Design materials so they are easy to understand, use plain language and avoid jargon. • Consider various means of communication for visual, auditory and tactile learners to engage diverse audiences with different learning styles.

Commitment to engagement process

Definition	The City should engage members of the public that are directly affected by local decisions. Committing to the engagement process further recognizes that inclusive public engagement involves strategic planning, effective use of engagement techniques and continuous evaluation and improvement of the City's engagement efforts.
Why	A commitment to the engagement process ensures that community members are able to participate meaningfully. This commitment can cultivate an atmosphere in which community members who may be impacted by a project or decision sense that their voices are acknowledged and taken into account, even if the ultimate outcome varies from the input they provided. Though universal satisfaction may not be – and often is not – possible, prioritizing a commitment to the engagement process demonstrates respect for community participation.
How	• Use real-life examples, relatable visuals, analogies and stories that resonate with communities. • Complete the Steps for Conducting Effective Public Participation. • Make continuous improvement through post-engagement evaluation.

How and When to Use the Guide

This guide is intended to help City departments reporting to the Mayor engage the public in effective and inclusive ways. It offers practical guidance on how the City can inform the public and gather public input throughout the course of City projects.

When to use the Guide

The Guide should be used for a range of City-led projects, such as:

- Policies and regulations
- Programs providing services
- Plans
- Infrastructure projects

This guide is not required by law and does not affect other applicable federal, state or local requirements. The Guide is not intended to be used in situations that require urgent action to protect public health or safety.

While this guide was created primarily for City departments, the City also hopes it will be a helpful resource for the public. Community members can use it to better understand how to participate in decision-making, and community organizations can use it to develop strategies for engaging the public in their projects.

Acknowledgments

The City of San Diego acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of the Kumeyaay Nation. Today, the Kumeyaay people continue to maintain their political sovereignty and cultural traditions as vital members of the San Diego community. We are honored to share this space with them and thank them for their stewardship.

The creation of the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide has been a significant journey, made possible by the extraordinary contributions and support of many. We are profoundly grateful for the expertise, time, and dedication of the people, departments and teams who have made this achievement possible.

Mayor

- Mayor Todd Gloria

City Council

- Joe LaCava, District 1
- Jennifer Campbell, District 2
- Stephen Whitburn, District 3
- Henry L. Foster III, District 4
- Marni von Wilpert, District 5
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Finance

- Rolando Charvel – Director and City Comptroller

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- James Gaboury – Assistant Fire Chief
- James Gartland – Lifeguard Chief
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Homelessness Strategies and Solutions

- Sarah Jarman – Director

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- Jon Terwilliger – Deputy Director

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- Oscar Gittemeier – Program Manager
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- Diana Fuentes – City Clerk
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Office of the City Treasurer
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Office of the Independent Budget Analyst
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- Tom Tomlinson – Assistant Director
- Sarah Erazo – Deputy Director
- Salome Martinez – Program Manager

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- Christine Millena, Paradise Hills
- Ethan Ramirez, Chollas Creek
- Danielle Knauff, Normal Heights
- Andrea Schlageter, Ocean Beach
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Boards, advisory groups and commissions

- Accessibility Advisory Board
- Community Planners Committee
- Mayoral Advisory Boards

Community partners

- Chollas Creek Coalition
- Climate Equity Working Group
- San Diego Promise Zone Partners

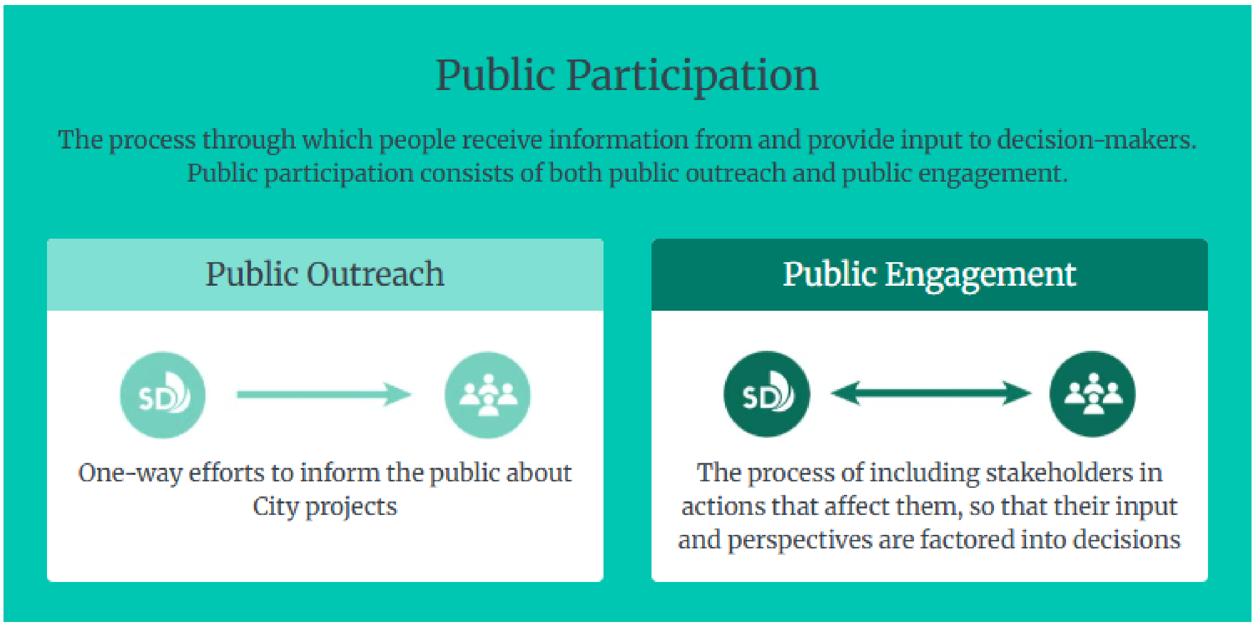
Consultant team/contributors

- Ascent
- Imagine Creative Services
- Kearns & West
- Local Policy Lab
- San Diego Housing Federation

Glossary

This glossary provides definitions for key terms used throughout the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide. The terms are alphabetized, with brief definitions specific to the terms' application throughout the Guide. Sources are provided if the term's definition was pulled directly from a resource without being changed.

The terms Public Participation, Public Outreach and Public Engagement are used throughout this guide. While they are related, they each have a distinct meaning. The section below illustrates the relationship between the three terms.



Terms

- **Accessibility:** The design of materials and environments to be usable by all people and the provision of services to make them so.
- **Accountability:** The ask of the public that the government is open and honest about the decision-making process, guided by the outcomes of meaningful public engagement and responsible for its actions and decisions.
- **Advocacy:** A form of civic engagement that encompasses any actions that help support the interests of specific communities and/or causes.
- **Audience:** The population or group of people that staff may inform or engage. Sometimes referred to as the "intended audience".
- **Awareness:** The knowledge or understanding the public has of a topic or project.
- **Barrier:** An obstacle that prevents or hinders participation or access, often due to physical, social or systemic factors.
- **Bias:** An unfair preference or prejudice toward or against a person or group that can impact decision-making and inclusivity.

- **Consultant:** A professional contracted to provide specialized advice, guidance and/or service. In public engagement, a consultant can help with the design, implementation and evaluation of engagement activities.
- **Community-based Organization:** A nonprofit or grassroots organization that advocates for specific policies, delivers community services or provides support to a specific area or population of people.
- **Community Members:** People who live, work and/or play in San Diego.
- **Community Planning Group:** Independent organizations made up of volunteer members that are recognized by the City to make recommendations to City decision-makers on certain development projects, long-range planning policies in plans and Citywide zoning and development.
- **Comparison Group:** The actual demographic group chosen for comparison with the Engagement Group. Depending on the project, this group may encompass a citywide, community-level or smaller population. Also see “Engagement Group” for further details.
- **Culture:** The values, attitudes and beliefs of a community.
- **Decision-maker:** Any staff, appointed official or elected member of the City that makes decisions on behalf of the City.
- **Demographics:** The statistical data that characterize a population, such as age, race and income.
- **Discrimination:** An action or practice that excludes, disadvantages, or differentiates between people based on some ascribed or perceived trait such as race, age or nationality. **Source: Oxford Bibliographies**
- **Disparities:** A measure that indicates a difference between specific groups or populations; the difference can lead to adverse outcomes.
- **Diversity:** The presence of differences within a given setting, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status and more.
- **Engagement Group**: The engagement event participants whose characteristics can be compared to overall citywide, community-level or smaller populations. Also see “Comparison Group” for further details.
- **Equity:** Occurs when each person’s different circumstances are recognized and resources and opportunities are allocated for them to reach an equal outcome.
- **Ethnicity:** The identification of one’s shared cultural or national background. A separate concept from race. The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide follows the U.S. Census’ demography convention of “Latino and Hispanic ethnicity” as independent from race. **Source: U.S. Census**
- **Exclusion:** The act of preventing groups of people or communities access through various means, including policies, practices and procedures.
- **Facilitation:** A process used to help a group of people or parties have constructive discussions about a project or perspectives. A facilitator can help create an

environment where all parties are respected, welcomed and feel comfortable participating.

- **Inclusion:** The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and numerical representation, inclusion involves authentic and meaningful participation and a true sense of belonging.
- **Input:** The opinions, ideas, suggestions and feedback on topics or projects collected from the public.
- **Intersectionality:** An approach arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, nationality and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems and affect each other.
- **Liaison:** The person or people who serve as the connection between different entities.
- **Majority:** A group comprised of more than half of the total population or sample.
- **Marginalization:** The systematic isolation of people or groups from resources necessary to thrive.
- **Notice:** The process of informing the public about engagement opportunities, project updates or other news.
- **Policy:** A formal statement of principles or guidelines established by a governing body, outlining its approach to a specific issue or area of operation.
- **Prejudice:** A preconceived attitude or biased judgment about a person or group of people that can lead to discriminatory practices and exclusion. **Source: EBSCO**
- **Project:** A general term used throughout the Guide to describe City policies, programs, plans and initiatives.
- **(the) Public:** Community members, businesses and organizations that the City serves.
- **Public Engagement:** The process of including stakeholders in actions that affect them, so that their input and perspectives are factored into decisions. Public engagement includes the consult, involve, collaborate and empower levels of public participation.
- **Public Participation:** The processes through which people receive information from and provide input to decision-makers.
- **Public Outreach:** One-way efforts to inform the public about City projects.
- **Race:** The social grouping of people, often based on physical characteristics, national origin or sociocultural groups. The U.S. Census notes that the collection of race data does not attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically or genetically. **Source: U.S. Census**
- **Representation:** The inclusion and portrayal of diverse groups so that different voices and perspectives are acknowledged and considered.

- **Stakeholder:** A community member, business or organization interested in and/or affected by a project.
- **Structural Exclusion:** Systems intentionally created to exclude, marginalize and oppress groups of people or specific communities.
- **Transparency:** The act of providing community members with information about what the government is doing.
- **Underrepresentation:** Refers to certain groups of people, based on characteristics such as age, race, gender or income, that are not proportionately represented in various activities or processes when compared to the general population.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Introduction

History and Background of Public Participation outlines historic and ongoing public participation in San Diego. This section recognizes groups historically excluded from decision-making within the region. It also highlights relevant existing regulations related to public participation at the federal, state and local levels. This section discusses potential barriers to public participation and how the City can increase access to public engagement opportunities. The City currently provides traditional opportunities to engage in the decision-making process, such as public hearings and advisory groups, while also employing diverse engagement techniques to share information and collect input.

Understanding historical and current public participation practices and regulations can inform the City's future public participation.

Structural Exclusion in Decision-Making

Structural exclusion refers to systemic barriers in programs, practices and policies that create disparities preventing individuals or communities from participating fully in decision-making processes and in accessing opportunities and resources. The following discussion outlines some past instances of structural exclusion and their impacts within the San Diego region.

While many discriminatory practices of the past have been reversed, that reversal has not immediately translated into equal public participation opportunities for all San Diegans. These exclusionary practices historically affected San Diego residents' ability to participate and can still impact the public's willingness to participate and trust in the government's intention to represent the best interest of all community members. It is important to recognize that some people have experienced multiple forms of exclusion simultaneously. The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide (Guide) seeks to proactively meet people who have experienced these effects, personally or generationally, where they are and to invite everyone into public participation. See the Guide's tip sheets for engaging diverse groups for more.

The following discussion identifies a brief history of harmful exclusion from public decision-making processes. By understanding this history, we can advance inclusive public engagement in the City's decision-making process.

African Americans

In 1868, the 14th Amendment granted African Americans citizenship rights. However, this did not always translate into the ability to vote. Polling restrictions led to systemic voting suppression and remained in effect until two years later when Congress passed the 15th Amendment, guaranteeing African American men their right to vote. Even with these provisions, Jim Crow laws remained in effect from the 1880s to the 1960s, when the Civil Rights Movement culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Jim Crow-era practices influenced the plan and design of San Diego. The 1956 Interstate Highway Act enabled federal and state governments to build a network of interstate highways across the country to improve congestion. The selected highway sites maintained segregation and displaced thousands of Black and minority Americans in every region across the nation (Archer, 2020). In San Diego, the State Route 94 highway built in the 1950s separated the predominantly Black area of Southeastern San Diego from predominantly white neighborhoods north of the freeway. Police sometimes arrested Black San Diegans if seen outside of the Southeast neighborhoods (Ford and Griffin, 1979).

Chinese immigrants

Following the Burlingame Treaty of 1868, the United States denied Chinese immigrants any possibility of citizenship. In 1882, President Arthur passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first-ever act preventing a group of people from entering the country. Chinese people living in San Diego risked being unable to return to the U.S. if they exited its borders (MacPhail, 1977). In 1885, an anti-Chinese movement convinced the San Diego Water Company to discharge all Chinese employees and replace them with white men (MacPhail, 1977). The Geary Act of 1894 extended the Chinese exclusion laws and required the registration and identification of all Chinese residents. The U.S. Supreme Court decided children of Chinese immigrants had the right to citizenship in 1898 (*United States v. Wong Kim Ark*,169 U.S. 649, (1898)).

Communities

Redlining was a common practice nationwide, in which the Federal Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) denied loans to people based on where they lived, income, race, and/or housing type (Federal Reserve History, n.d.). The HOLC created maps of many cities in the nation, including San Diego. Neighborhoods were labeled on a scale of desirable in blue and green zones to least desirable or red zones (hence the term “redlining”). The D-rated or least desirable communities consisted of mostly immigrants and communities of color (Beal, 2024). This convention resulted in a lack of home opportunities for people of color, a lack of investment in public infrastructure and the siting of polluting and harmful land uses in these areas (Estien, 2024; FRH, n.d.). Redlining practices remained into the late 1970s and 1980s in San Diego, and banks gave few loans to neighborhoods primarily consisting of racial minorities (SD Union, 1977).

Disability community

Historically, people with disabilities were subjected to discriminatory state and local policies that limited their civic participation. In the 1860s, local laws in cities across California excluded some people with disabilities from entering public spaces based on how their disabilities affected their physical appearance (Schewik, 2009). This discrimination of the disabled community went further in the early 20th century with the passage of state laws that infringed on bodily autonomy, often forcing sterilizations under the guise of "race betterment" (Irons, 2003). As recently as 2015, California state law disallowed people the right to vote based on perceived cognitive abilities and conservatorship status (May, 2017). Today, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 aim to provide equal opportunities and generally disallow the exclusion of people with disabilities from federally funded programs, services or other benefits.

Filipino immigrants

Following the Philippine-American War between 1899 and 1902, the Philippines was annexed as a U.S territory. As U.S. nationals, Filipinos began immigrating to the U.S. largely to work in agricultural industries (Guevarra, 2024; González, 2013). In 1912, a U.S. District Court ruling (In re Alverto 198 F. 688, 1912) denied Filipino immigrants eligibility for citizenship. In addition, the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 further restricted Filipinos' immigration to the U.S. by reclassifying them from U.S. nationals to "aliens" and establishing an immigration quota maximum of 50 people per year. Because Filipinos were no longer recognized as U.S. nationals, they were largely excluded from full citizenship rights such as voting and owning property (FANHS, 2025).

In 1933, the California legislature amended its Civil Code to prohibit intermarriage between white people and Filipinos. This statute was not repealed until 1948 (Caragozian, 2022). The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 granted Asian immigrants, including Filipinos, the legal right to become U.S. citizens. Later, this act was amended in 1965 to eliminate the national-origins quota system.

Japanese Americans

After Pearl Harbor in 1941, many in California feared further attack. Federal and State governments required Japanese American citizens to reside in camps. The basis for the exclusion of Japanese people, both American citizens and not, was considered a "military necessity" due to misperceptions that Japan had communicated with Japanese American citizens (Hasawega, 2008). However, J. Edgar Hoover later admitted that hysteria and racial prejudice drove internment rather than genuine security concerns (MacPhail, 1977).

In San Diego, the local press published many articles that increased the public's fear of Japanese American community members (Schlenker, 1972). In February 1942, the National City Defense Council published a resolution that the local Japanese population hampered the defense of San Diego County (Schlenker, 1972). In April 1942, the military forcefully removed 1,150 Japanese American citizens from San Diego and shipped them to Military Area No. 1 and Santa Anita Racetrack (Schlenker, 1972). Living conditions in these camps were characterized by overcrowding and inadequate facilities. (Schlenker, 1972). Japanese confinement ended on March 20, 1946 (Library of Congress, n.d.).

LGBTQIA+ community

The LGBTQIA+ community has historically faced structural exclusion in the U.S. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, LGBTQIA+ people were subject to discrimination enacted through federal, state and local policy which limited their opportunities to participate in civic life, such as the criminalization of private consensual sexual acts between two people of the same sex (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003), and the "Don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding LGBTQIA+ people in military service (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020). In San Diego, the City enacted a local ordinance in 1917 that prohibited sexual activity unless the participants were husband and wife. In addition, in 1966, the City passed Ordinance 9439 (Section 5619) that prohibited people from wearing apparel that was not considered appropriate for their gender presentation, as it was assumed that people who cross-dressed were committing same-sex acts that were deemed illegal at the time. This ordinance was not repealed until 1998 (San Diego History Center, 2019).

Same-sex marriages were not recognized at the federal or state levels until the 2015 landmark case *Obergefell v. Hodges* that resulted in the Supreme Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide.

Mexican immigrants

Beginning in 1917, many southern border towns, including San Diego, subjected Mexican immigrants to compulsory delousing. One of these methods was gasoline baths, a practice that subjected individuals to harsh and degrading treatment justified as necessary for border sanitation. Procedures like this reinforced racial stereotypes and targeted Mexican workers under the guise of disease prevention which lasted into the 1960s (Molina, 2014; Chakraborty, 2019).

When the Bracero Program began in 1942, it facilitated labor migration from Mexico. However, these workers had limited rights and protections. Despite their economic contributions, they were often treated as temporary laborers, not community members (Hernandez, 2006). Operation Wetback in 1954 targeted Mexican immigrants and even U.S. citizens of Hispanic ancestry, resulting in mass deportations and family separations (Ngai, 2004). Because of its border city status, San Diego became a central hub for the Chicano movement, particularly in Logan Heights and Barrio Logan, where residents mobilized against systemic injustices. In 1970, community members organized to preserve Chicano Park when the California Highway Patrol attempted to build a station under the Coronado Bridge, which would have further displaced the community.

Native Americans

When San Diego became a city in 1850, new residents had already displaced many Native Americans who did not yet have citizenship. Their ability to shape the future of the newly formed City was minimal as the country reserved voting for white men who owned property.

The Cupeño Removal of 1903 was the last enforced relocation of Native Americans out of their homelands in the U.S. This affected the Cupeño, Luiseño and Kumeyaay peoples in San Diego (Brigandi, 2018). While the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 granted citizenship status to Native Americans, there were practices in place to prevent Native Americans from voting. Polling hosts sometimes made locations inaccessible to tribes, shortened voting hours and required literacy tests and specific residency (Rollings, 2004). The Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination in voting, protecting all citizens' right to vote and preventing the continuation of these suppression tactics.

Pacific Islanders

Pacific Islanders have varying decision-making rights in the U.S. depending on their nation of origin. People from U.S. Samoa are classified as U.S. nationals, yet they do not receive the full rights of U.S. citizenship, including the right to vote in federal elections. People from the Compact of Free Association Migrants (i.e., Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau) hold a special status that allows them to work in the U.S. without a visa, however they are not considered citizens or nationals, and therefore also cannot vote in federal elections. These differing rights and restrictions contribute to structural barriers to civic participation (Morey, et al., 2020).

Women

The Expatriation Act of 1907 stripped U.S.-born female citizens of their citizenship if they married a foreign man. The husband's citizenship determined their wife's citizenship until the federal government passed the Cable Act of 1922. However, the Cable Act did not extend to Asian American women who married those ineligible for citizenship until the Nationality Act of 1940 allowed all women who lost citizenship in marriage to repatriate. In 1911, California gave women the right to vote before the rest of American women, who remained excluded from public decision-making until passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 (Cooney Jr., n.d.).

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Existing Public Participation Regulatory and Policy Framework

In order to establish a baseline for public participation, it is important to understand the current legislative framework as it relates to various laws and policies. The regulatory context outlined below influences the City of San Diego's current public participation practices. The following legislation and policy descriptions do not detail a comprehensive definition of their purpose but rather how they specifically relate to public participation. Each level of government operates under the framework of the higher level of government. For example, the State operates within Federal requirements, and the local agency (City) implements State and Federal policies in a way that best advances the interests of the people of San Diego.

Level	Title	Year	Relation to Public Participation
Federal	**U.S. Constitution 14th Amendment**	1868	Citizenship to all born and naturalized in the U.S.; right to vote
	U.S. Constitution 15th Amendment	1870	Right to vote for men of all races
	U.S. Constitution 19th Amendment	1920	Women's right to vote
	Civil Rights Act	1964	Prohibits discrimination in federally funded programs
	Voting Rights Act	1965	Protects right to vote against racial bias
	Freedom of Information Act	1967	Provides the public the right to access records from any federal agency, unless the records are exempt from disclosure
	Americans with Disabilities Act	1990	Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities; equal voting rights for people with disabilities
	Title 24, Housing and Urban Development of the Code of Federal Regulations	2015	Requires public participation for federally funded housing and community development consolidated plans

State	**Ralph M. Brown Act**	1953	Guarantees the right of access to and participation in public meetings and establishes requirements for state and local governments' noticing and public meeting processes
	California Public Records Act	1968	Requires government records to be disclosed to the public, upon request, unless the records are exempt from disclosure
	California Environmental Quality Act	1970	State and local governments must analyze the significant environmental effects of proposed discretionary plans and projects and inform the public accordingly
	Government Code Section 65351	2005	Requires state and local governments to provide participation opportunities for all members of the public when preparing general plans, including Californian Native American Tribes and disadvantaged communities
	Senate Bill 113 (2014)	2014	Expands voter pre-registration to individuals aged 16 and older

City	**Municipal Code**	1889	Includes various public hearing and noticing requirements
	Charter of the City of San Diego Article V, Section 43	1931	The City may create and fill advisory boards, commissions and committees to advise the City on specific decisions
	Council Policy No. 000-02	Adopted: 1962 Amended: 2017	Identifies opportunities for public involvement in the City's annual budget decisions through public outreach
	Council Policy No. 000-16	1994	Requires that all City boards, commissions and committee meetings be open to the public and follow Brown Act requirements

	Council Policy No. 000-17	2025	Establishes procedures for providing copies of the City Council docket back-up material to the public
	Council Policy No. 000-21	2021	Establishes procedures for members of the public, Councilmembers, the Mayor, mayoral departments, independent department directors or public agencies to submit ballot proposals to City Council
	Council Policy No. 000-31	2022	Establishes requirements for enhancing Capital Improvement Projects' transparency and access to information through meetings with stakeholders
	Council Policy No. 000-32	Adopted: 2013 Amended: 2022	Identifies opportunities for public input on infrastructure needs from all residents
	Council Policy No. 100-18	Adopted: 1997 Amended: 2015	Allows communities to address parking demands by incorporating public input in the management of the district
	Council Policy No. 200-10	2017	Confers honorary street titles as supported by input from local community councils, planning groups, recreation councils and community leaders
	Council Policy No. 600-09	Adopted: 1970 Amended: 2022	Establishes Community Planners Committee, which formed in 1970, as an independent organization that provides input on citywide matters related to the General Plan and related planning, infrastructure and development programs
	Council Policy No. 600-24	Adopted: 1976 Amended: 2024	Governs the conduct of recognized planning groups and their duty to seek community participation in the planning process. Amendments to enhance participation have included removing minimum meeting attendance requirements for candidacy and voting in annual elections, including a community participation and representation plan for each planning group, as well as removing limitations for conducting virtual meetings

	Council Policy No. 600-33	Adopted: 2009 Amended: 2016	Identifies and requires advanced notification of public participation opportunities for park development
	Council Policy No. 700-42	2005	Considers input from recreation councils in the fiscal administration, planning, promotion and development of recreation programs
	Council Policy No. 900-19	2005	Considers input from community members and local planning groups to protect designated tree resources on public land and right-of-way
	Administrative Regulation No. 10.30	1993	Establishes requirements related to providing notices and public meetings for new or increased general taxes or assessments
	Administrative Regulation No. 25.80	2018	Establishes procedures for how the City will officially advertise contracts and notifications
	Administrative Regulation No. 90.61	2023	Defines standards for establishing, using, monitoring and retaining the City's social media accounts and social media content
	Administrative Regulation No. 95.40	2018	Establishes policies for payment of expenses such as transportation, meals and parking, incurred by members of City boards and commissions while conducting City business
	Administrative Regulation No. 96.20	2020	Requires the City to provide documents, programs and services that are accessible to people with disabilities

Barriers to Participation

The City continues to work on breaking down barriers to provide all community members access to public engagement opportunities. People may not be able to or may not wish to participate in engagement for a variety of reasons and may need additional resources, specific information or support to make their voice heard and represented in decision-making processes. Addressing barriers that prevent people from participating will help the City make sustainable decisions that best serve San Diegans. The following key barriers have been identified through internal and external engagement during the development of this guide. These can be compounding as people may experience multiple barriers simultaneously.

Awareness and understanding

People may lack awareness of jurisdictional boundaries, the differences between city, county, state and federal agencies, the responsibilities of the public and private sector and formal public processes like City Council hearings. Additionally, without sharing information widely about opportunities to participate, the public faces barriers in understanding how to get involved.

When community members are fully informed of opportunities to engage and understand the purpose of participation, they are more likely to contribute their input. Achieving this includes sharing information across multiple communication channels and using different tactics to inform community members. It is important to continue to explore innovative and effective outreach strategies to increase awareness of public engagement opportunities and actively encourage participation. The City can play a role in helping communities understand engagement processes, enabling them to effectively navigate local government systems and provide meaningful input on important issues.

Language barriers

Language barriers can make it challenging for non-English speakers or those with limited English proficiency to engage in civic processes fully. Sharing important project information and promoting engagement events without language access considerations can make it difficult for people with different language preferences to understand how to participate. This can lead to lower participation rates and less diverse perspectives in the decision-making process. By addressing language barriers, community members can have a platform to share their perspectives, concerns and insights comfortably. Incorporating language access through translation and interpretation services sends a clear message to community members that their participation, regardless of their language needs, is valued.

Limited access to technology

The City has found that not all community members have access to reliable broadband internet service or smart devices. This gap in technology access can limit people's ability to engage in online activities. Others may face challenges using the internet or other digital devices due to varying familiarity and proficiency with technology. This can create a barrier to participation, preventing digitally under-resourced communities from effectively engaging in virtual strategies like online surveys, web-based meetings or providing feedback through other digital channels.

Understanding that digital access remains a challenge, outreach can continue through traditional forms of media to gather feedback from those with lesser digital access by providing multiple ways to participate, including in-person engagement opportunities that meet people where they are.

Structural exclusion

Structural exclusion refers to systemic barriers in programs, practices, and policies that create disparities preventing individuals or communities from participating fully in decision-making processes and in accessing opportunities and resources. These systemic barriers can include histories of institutional racism and disinvestment. Structural exclusion has led some to mistrust the government, feel unwelcome at public engagement events and/or believe that their participation may not lead to meaningful change. Furthermore, people commonly encounter multiple structural challenges simultaneously, such as transportation constraints, financial hardship, accessibility issues, food insecurity or lack of childcare.

These barriers represent resource disparities that can affect people's ability to influence City decisions. It is important for the City to continue to design proactive strategies to overcome these barriers, including providing support that makes participation more feasible, implementing tailored engagement that meets people where they are and building partnerships with community organizations that have developed strong relationships with community members. Creating a welcoming environment that actively seeks and values diverse perspectives can foster greater community involvement. By implementing strategies that address these structural barriers, the City can create more inclusive opportunities for all community members to participate in the public decision-making process.

Time limitations

People often need to juggle competing demands between their jobs, families, personal obligations and meeting basic day-to-day needs. The time and energy community members spend on everyday commitments is a foundational barrier that can be intensified for those with fewer resources. With many conflicting priorities, less time can be spent attending public engagement events, studying materials or providing thoughtful feedback. Ultimately, some people have more immediate concerns they need to prioritize over public engagement, which may be seen as a secondary priority. To address this, it is important to continue to offer a variety of opportunities to participate to the greatest extent possible, such as opportunities at different times of the day and requiring different levels of time commitment.

Trust

People may have limited trust in the City and other government institutions, which affects their interest in participating. This could be because processes feel unclear or exclusive, past concerns were unaddressed or due to previous enforcement actions of a government agency. To address this, staff can promote transparency, community relationships and inclusion by partnering with people and groups that have a history and trust with the community, communicating how the public can provide input, and regularly following up and reporting back to the public about how their input was used. Staff can also create more comfortable engagement environments by adopting a trauma-informed approach and welcoming diverse perspectives. These practices can show that the City is listening, implementing the public's input when possible and working to build a foundation of mutual understanding with the public.

Traditional Engagement Platforms

Official City engagement platforms provide San Diegans various opportunities to participate in local government decision-making. From public meetings to advisory boards, these traditional methods present diverse opportunities for providing input to the City. While traditional engagement methods provide formal engagement opportunities, they do not always work for everyone, and therefore this Guide provides additional engagement strategies to ensure more inclusive engagement. To learn about how to get involved with some of the opportunities below, see *City of San Diego 101*.

Engagement with elected offices

- Mayor
  - Residents and organizations can submit inquiries to the Mayor's Office that his staff address, and the Mayor's community engagement team participates in local community meetings and maintains communication with resident leaders and organizations.
- City Council
  - Nine Councilmembers each represent the City's nine districts, and their major responsibilities involve enacting laws, budgetary approvals and responses to constituent concerns. Community members engage with the council by attending public meetings, offering comments on agenda items and participating in general discussions on city governance. Councilmembers each have community representatives on their staff to work directly with each neighborhood on community priorities.

Engagement through public hearings

Community members can submit public comment for City consideration at public hearings, such as Planning Commission and City Council meetings. They can also submit public comment at workshops, web-based meetings and other public meetings.

Advisory boards and commissions

The City currently has 44 boards and commissions made up of volunteer community members appointed by the Mayor and City Council. These official advisory bodies serve the City by providing recommendations on various fiduciary, regulatory and policy issues. City boards and commissions typically hold public meetings and allow for public comment. The boards and commissions meet and post agendas online as well as ways to participate in meetings and sign up to receive notices. For examples, see the Historical Resources Board or Planning Commission.

Community Recreation Groups

The City's 49 Community Recreation Groups provide recommendations to the City Council, Parks and Recreation Department and Parks and Recreation Board about proposed park infrastructure, community recreation programs and the distribution of funds for public parks and open space within the city. Council Policy 700-42, adopted in 1981 and amended in 2005, guides City cooperation with the volunteer members of the public who create and operate Community Recreation Groups.

Planning groups and the Community Planners Committee

Community planning groups are independent groups that are recognized by the City under Council Policy 600-24. These groups provide a way for community members to advise the City Council, Planning Commission and other decision-makers on community-specific topics, including land use, development projects and infrastructure. Per Council Policy 600-09, the Community Planners Committee is an advisory body composed of the chair of each planning group and is intended to provide a forum for recommendations on citywide topics.

City Engagement Today

Today, City departments employ diverse and innovative public outreach and engagement techniques to involve the public in City projects.

Sharing information

- The City uses electronic platforms to share information with the public, such as through e-newsletters. Inside San Diego provides Citywide news and updates for subscribers interested in news across the organization. Many City departments also have regular newsletters sharing information about planned or ongoing work, allowing people to stay informed about specific topics they are interested in.
- City departments offer virtual, in-person or hybrid workshops and information sessions to educate residents about planned or current services. For example, the Environmental Services Department has held in-person and virtual information sessions about the Organic Waste Recycling Program.
- The City has also implemented creative information-sharing methods. For the Stormwater Department's Think Blue San Diego educational campaign, staff and partners participated in pop-up booths at local events, film screenings and art installations that raise awareness about stormwater pollution.
- The City has also implemented more casual ways to share information, such as "Coffee with a Cop," an event at which community members are invited to meet their local police officers at a coffee shop so that officers can share information and answer questions.
- Meeting people where they are allows the City to be effective when sharing information about government programs and services. For example, the Economic Development Department went business to business in flood-impacted areas after the Jan. 2024 storm to share information about emergency relief grant opportunities for small businesses and nonprofits. The City's Coordinated Street Outreach Program also conducts focused outreach events in areas with people experiencing homelessness to share resources and connect them to supportive services.

Collecting input

In addition to traditional engagement platforms, the City has taken various steps to broaden the range of inclusive engagement strategies.

- Surveys are a standard tool across departments for gathering community input. For example, the City has an ongoing survey that asks for community input on infrastructure priorities like sidewalks, parks and libraries to help prioritize infrastructure projects. For some specific infrastructure projects, like the Ocean Beach Pier Renewal, surveys have been used to assess which design option the public prefers.
- Digital engagement via mobile application is another avenue for collecting input. The City's Get-It-Done app allows community members to submit requests and reports about non-emergency infrastructure or maintenance issues within the City right-of-way. Reports connect directly to the City's work tracking system, which provides users with information about the progress of their requests.
- In recent years, the City has partnered with community-based organizations (CBOs) for their engagement services for projects such as the Climate Action Plan and the Environmental Justice Element. Through these contracts, CBOs have implemented techniques to reach and seek input from people in their communities. For example, to capture input about climate resilience priorities, CBOs conducted bilingual phone banking to understand how climate change impacts local residents' quality of life. To gather feedback about environmental justice priorities, some CBOs conducted walk audits with community members to observe local environmental conditions and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Some City projects have focused on reaching specific demographics or industry sectors to build a shared vision for the future. For example, the City's Child and Youth Strategic Plan is a roadmap of youth success solutions created from a wide range of engagement activities with children, youth and their families. The City held more than 33 focus groups to hear the priorities of close to 300 youth and young adults.

Moving forward

The Inclusive Public Engagement Guide will build upon these efforts to make sharing information and collecting public input efficient, cohesive and inclusive across City departments, while also expanding the range of strategies staff can use to create opportunities for public participation.

UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

Introduction

Underrepresented groups are people that participate at a lower frequency in public engagement compared to the general population. Underrepresentation can be identified through demographic factors as well as characteristics or interests, which may be intersectional and compounding.

As a result of being underrepresented in public participation, underrepresented groups can have lesser influence on policy and project outcomes that affect their community and lives. By promoting inclusive public participation, the City can seek to address these disparities so that more people can have a greater involvement in local decision-making.

Summary of underrepresentation findings

In a review of public perceptions of underrepresentation, the demographics of people who had engaged in recent citywide projects, a recent survey of planning group members and representation among local stakeholder advocacy groups, it was observed that people of color and youth were the most frequently identified underrepresented groups. Following them were older adults, individuals with limited time due to work commitments and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Approach and insights

To understand who is missing from the City decision-making process, qualitative and quantitative information was assessed. An analysis of planning group members conducted in 2019 found that a lower proportion of community planning group members were renters, lived in multi-unit homes (apartments, condominiums, duplexes, etc.), identified as female, identified as non-white or were in an age group between 18 and 49 than the city's total population. Underrepresentation of specific demographic groups in the San Diego region's boards and commissions was also independently identified 2018 Community Representation Report by the Center on Policy Initiatives. Underrepresented groups were identified as Black, Indigenous and other people of color, women, low-wage workers, LGBTQIA+ individuals, immigrants and non-citizens. The study found that decision-making bodies in the San Diego region did not fully represent the diverse communities they serve.

Similarly, an analysis of select City project public engagement summaries found that the fewest respondents came from those who indicated an age of 24 or younger, followed by those older than 65. It also found that, proportionally, Asian, Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino populations were found to be underrepresented when compared to the city's general population.

At a broader scale, there are local communities or causes that may have more limited representation due to fewer organizations advocating for the topic of interest to those communities. The City conducted a frequency analysis of nonprofit stakeholder advocacy groups using information from readily accessible data sources. Staff analyzed these groups to assess their representation across topic area categories and keywords. Twenty-eight of the 133 identified topics areas had three or fewer advocacy organizations within the city, including “Accessible Design,” “Childcare” and “Trade Schools.” While the frequency of advocacy groups for a topic area does not necessarily correlate with the power to influence local decision-making, topic areas with more advocacy groups may suggest a stronger, more organized movement, while those with fewer may indicate more limited representation.

City staff also sought input from community members through City-affiliated groups and community-based organizations to understand their perception of what groups are underrepresented. Discussions with local stakeholders revealed that they perceived youth and working people with limited time as the most underrepresented groups in the public engagement process.

Local Demographics

The information below can be used to understand existing City demographics or more localized data for a project area. Understanding the demographic makeup of San Diego creates a baseline that allows the City to identify who may be missing from public engagement processes.

Important: As the datasets on this page are provided by external organizations, please note their availability and content are subject to change. The guidance provided here is accurate as of the date of publication, and specific steps required to retrieve information may be subject to change.

Citywide demographics

Below are a series of charts and tables that represent current demographics of the city of San Diego based on the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) administered by the United States Census Bureau.

The ACS provides data every year about America's people, places and economy. Find more U.S. Census Bureau data on San Diego by visiting the city's census profile. For information on languages spoken across the city or within a community, please reference the *Translation and Interpretation* page in *Communicating with the Public* section.

Table 1 Race and Ethnicity[1]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
American Indian and Alaska Native Alone	3,190	0.23%
Asian Alone	230,555	16.45%
Black or African American Alone	86,490	6.17%
Hispanic or Latino	421,636	30.08%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Alone	5,296	0.38%
Some Other Race Alone	3,137	0.22%
Two or More Races	50,396	3.59%
White Alone	601,232	42.89%

[1] U.S. Census Bureau, "Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table B03002, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B03002?q=B03002&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

Table 2 Age[2]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
Under 5 years	85,641	6.11%
5 – 9 years	76,836	5.48%
10 – 14 years	74,668	5.33%
15 – 19 years	84,048	6.00%
20 – 24 years	121,278	8.65%
25 – 29 years	141,539	10.10%
30 – 34 years	124,687	8.89%
35 – 39 years	100,940	7.20%
40 – 44 years	91,403	6.52%
45 – 49 years	87,011	6.21%
50 – 54 years	87,275	6.23%
55 – 59 years	81,012	5.78%
60 – 64 years	73,790	5.26%
65 – 69 years	57,396	4.09%
70 – 74 years	41,646	2.97%
75 – 79 years	28,208	2.01%
80 – 84 years	21,311	1.52%
85 years and over	23,243	1.66%

Table 3 Education[3]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
Less than high school graduate	100,183	10.33%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	146,595	15.11%
Some college or associate's degree	251,119	25.88%
Bachelor's degree	275,333	28.38%
Graduate or professional degree	197,041	20.31%

[2] U.S. Census Bureau, "Age and Sex," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0101, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S0101?q=S0101&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

[3] U.S. Census Bureau, "Place of Birth by Educational Attainment in the United States," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table B06009, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B06009?q=B06009&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

Table 4 Occupancy[4]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
Owner-occupied	245,323	47.59%
Renter-occupied	270,152	52.41%

Table 5 Income[5]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
Less than $24,999	60,826	11.80%
$25,000 to $34,999	27,836	5.40%
$35,000 to $49,999	38,145	7.40%
$50,000 to $74,999	70,620	13.70%
$75,000 to $99,999	63,403	12.30%
$100,000 to $149,999	99,602	19.40%
$150,000 to $199,999	59,280	11.50%
$200,000 or more	95,878	18.60%

[4]U.S. Census Bureau, "Tenure by Bedrooms," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table B25042, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B25042?q=B25042&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

[5]U.S. Census Bureau, "Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2024 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S1901, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S1901?q=s1901&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

Table 6 Housing Type[6]

Demographic	Number of People	Percent of Total
1, Attached	54,754	9.91%
1, Detached	241,392	43.71%
2 Units	11,338	2.05%
3 to 4 Units	31,641	5.73%
5 to 9 Units	52,472	9.50%
10 to 19 Units	41,767	7.56%
20 to 49 Units	35,531	6.43%
50 or more Units	77,253	13.99%
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	234	0.04%
Mobile Home	5,903	1.07%

- Definitions for the Housing Type categories are as follows:
  - 1, Attached: A residential building that shares at least one wall with another property, but is still considered a single unit, like a townhome or rowhouse.
  - 1, Detached: A residential building that does not share its walls with another property
  - 2 or more Units: Residential buildings, like apartments, condominiums or single-room occupancy complexes, that contain units built one on top of another and/or have common facilities
  - Mobile Home: A prefabricated structure, transportable in one or more sections, to be used as a temporary or permanent residence.
  - Boat, RV, Van, Etc.: Any living quarters occupied as a housing unit that does not fit the previous categories.

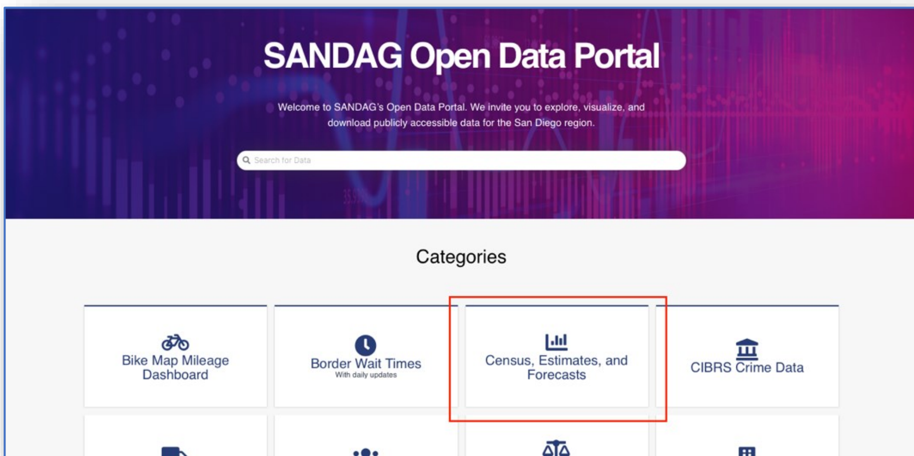
[6] U.S. Census Bureau, "Units in Structure," American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table B25024, 2022, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDT5Y2022.B25024?q=B25024&g=1400000US06073003403_160XX00US0666000

How to find community-level demographic information

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) releases datasets based on the U.S. Census. This data allows for easy cross-reference of a limited subset of Census data points to local, more specific geographies not always provided by the Census Bureau.

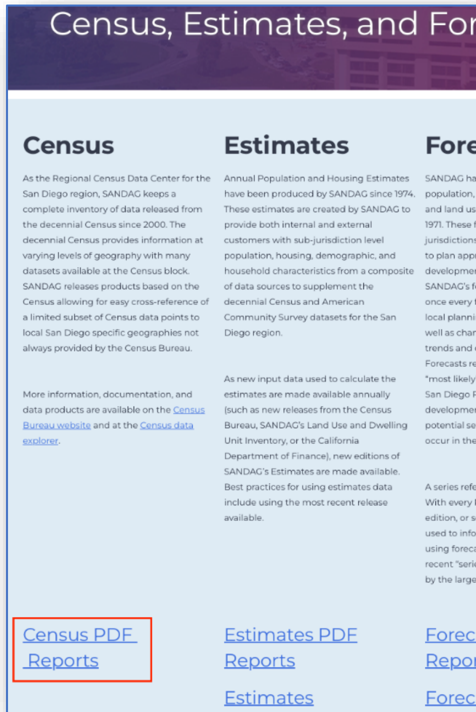
Guidance is provided below on how to retrieve demographic information for geographic areas like a community plan area or Council District. City staff can consult with the Performance & Analytics Department for more detailed information or assistance.

- *Navigate to the Census dataset*
  - Visit the SANDAG Open Data portal
  - Retrieve the Census data by navigating to the "Census, Estimates, and Forecasts" through the module below.

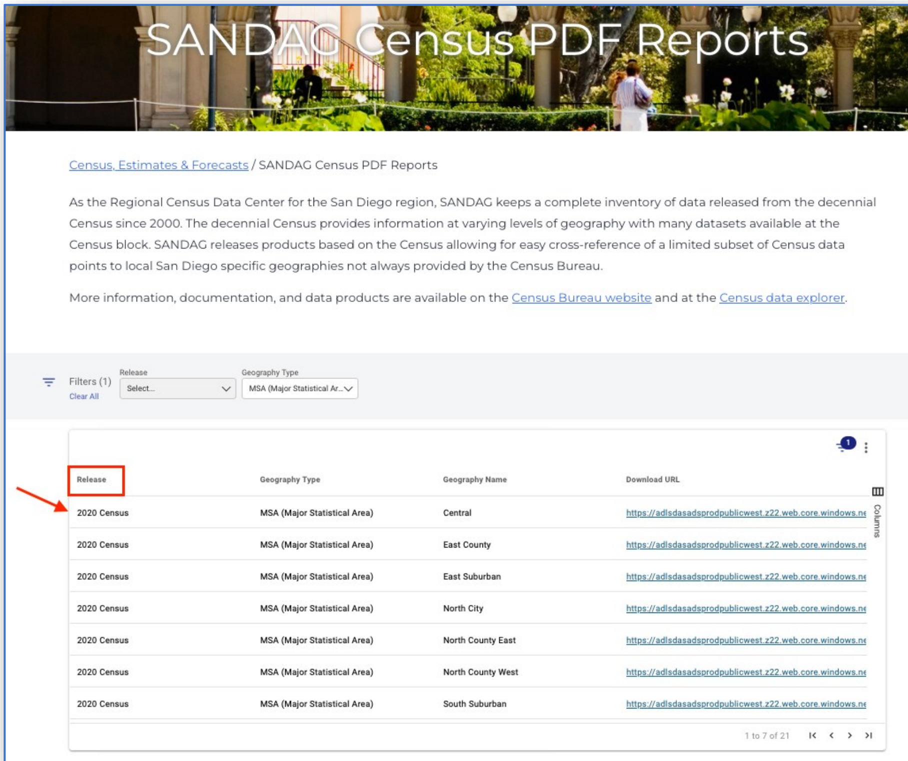


- *Determine the data format needed*
  - SANDAG currently publishes Census data in PDF (graphic) format that can be viewed in an Internet browser, and csv (tabular) format that can be analyzed further in software like Excel or Google Sheets. The type of analysis staff will conduct will determine which format works best.
    - To retrieve quick facts about certain demographics for a single geographic area, the Census PDFs may work best. (Go to Retrieving Census PDF-format data)
    - If staff will conduct a more in-depth analysis, or compare multiple geographic areas for analysis, the csv/tabular data may work best. (Go straight to Retrieving Census raw tabular data)

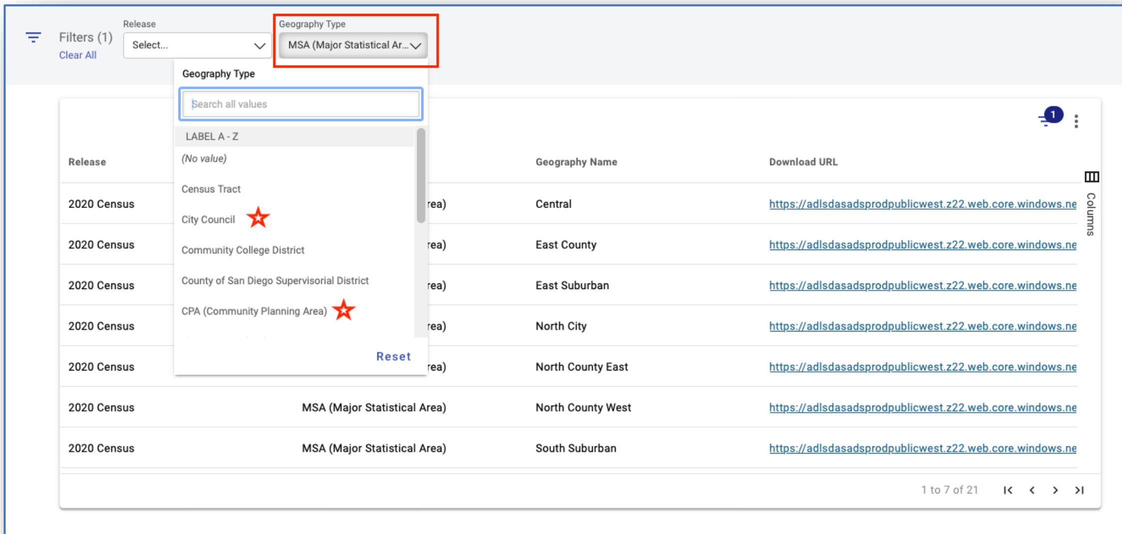
- *Retrieving Census PDF-format data*
  - From the '[Census, Estimates, and Forecasts](#)' page, click "Census PDF Reports".



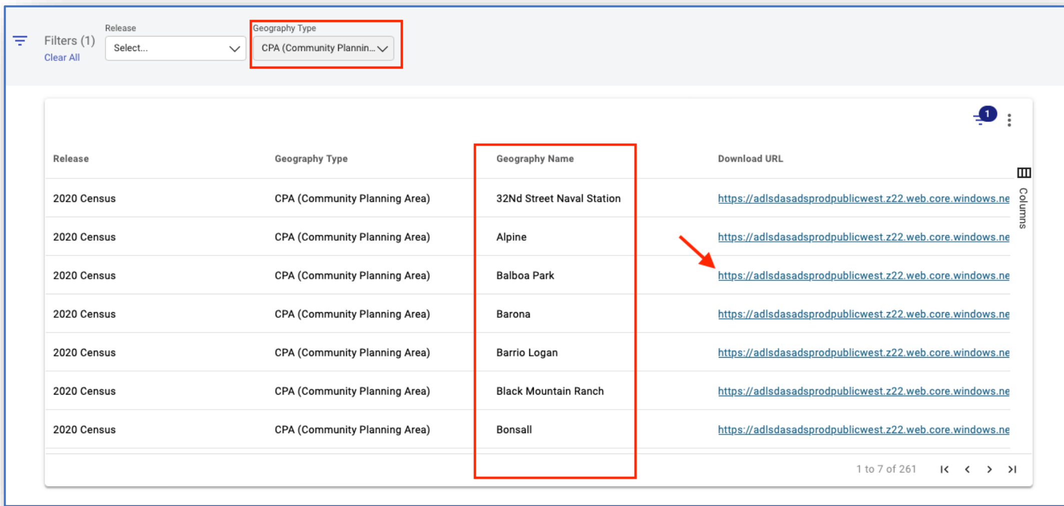
- Verify that the most up-to-date Census data is being displayed by checking the ‘Release’ column in the data viewer.



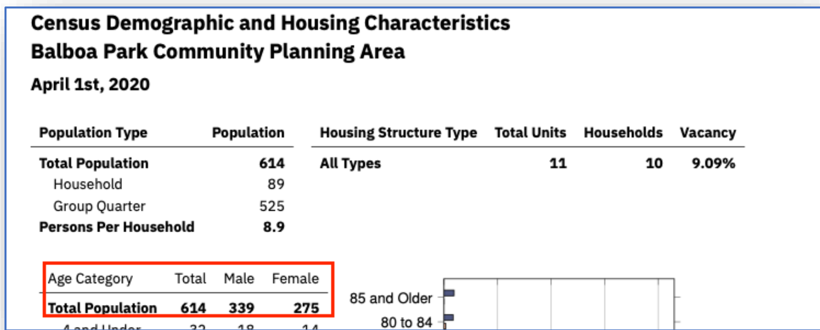
- In the filter bar, select the type of geography that is being analyzed. For community-level projects, this will likely be Community Plan Area (CPA). For neighborhood-level projects, this will likely be Census tracts.



- Once the geography is selected, use the ‘Geography Name’ column to find the geography that is being analyzing. Click the URL in the ‘Download URL’ column to retrieve the PDF report with the demographic data.



- Retrieve the specific demographic data of interest.
  i. Relevant demographic characteristics may include age categories, gender identity and race/ethnicity.
  ii. The PDF data is raw count data (#). This count data should be converted into a proportion for comparison with the engagement event's participants. To convert the raw count into a proportion, take the count of the demographic category (e.g., Female - 275) and divide it by the total population (e.g., Total - 614) The resulting percentage is the proportion. (275/614 = .447 or 44.7%)



Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics
Balboa Park Community Planning Area
April 1st, 2020

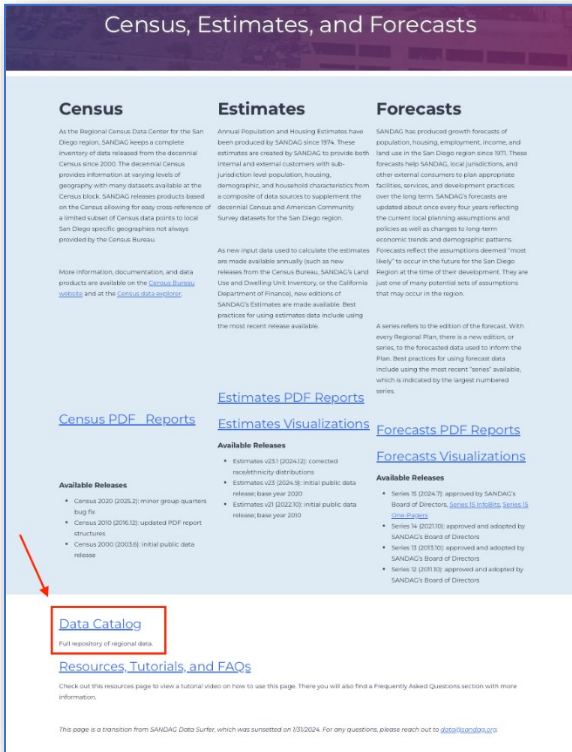
Population Type	Population
Total Population	**614**
Household	89
Group Quarter	525
Persons Per Household	**8.9**

Housing Structure Type	Total Units	Households	Vacancy
All Types	**11**	**10**	**9.09%**

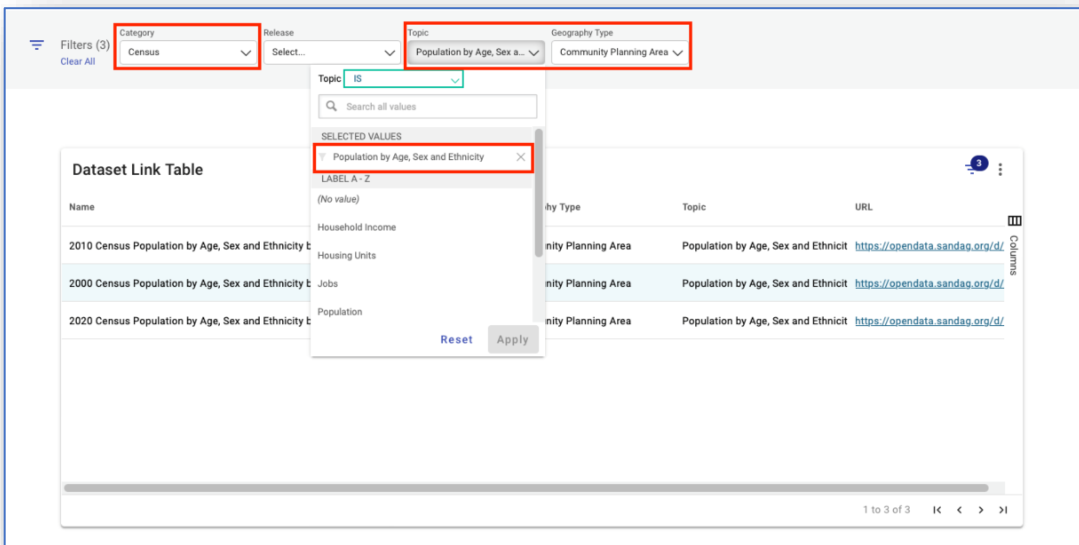
Age Category	Total	Male	Female
Total Population	**614**	**339**	**275**

  iii. If all the data needed for the analysis are retrieved, stop here. If a spreadsheet format, such as an Excel or csv file, are needed, continue to learn how to retrieve raw tabular data.

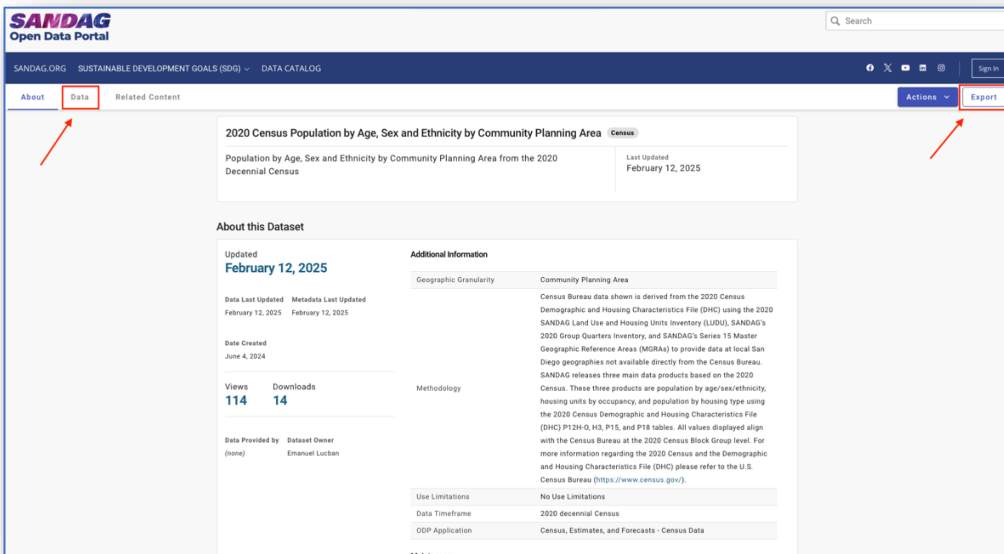
- *Retrieving Census raw tabular data*
  - Click the '[Data Catalog]' link.



- In the Filter bar, select the category, topic and geography type.
  - Select Category as “Census”
  - Select Topic as “Population by Age, Sex, and Ethnicity”
  - For Geography, select the type of geographic area staff will be analyzing. For community-level projects, this will most commonly be Community Plan Area (CPA). For neighborhood-level projects, this will most commonly be Census tracts.



- Verify that the most up-to-date Census data is being used by looking at the name.
- Click the URL in the URL column to be taken to the dataset page.
- Retrieve data from the dataset page.
  - Preview the data by clicking on the “Data” tab in the upper left-hand side of the webpage.
  - Download the raw data by clicking the “Export” button on the upper right-hand side of the webpage.



Public Perceptions of Underrepresentation

To understand who is missing from public engagement, staff met with community members and stakeholders in 2023 and 2024 about their perception of underrepresented groups in the City's decision-making processes.

Staff sought input from City-affiliated groups like the Focused Discussion Group, Climate Equity Working Group, San Diego Promise Zone Partners and Community Planners Committee. Members of the Mayoral Advisory Boards and the Chollas Creek Coalition (a place-based advocacy group composed of community-based organizations and residents in the Chollas Creek area) also shared insight with staff about their perceptions of underrepresented groups.

Overall, discussions with local stakeholders revealed that they perceived youth and working people with limited time as the most underrepresented groups in the public engagement process. Other frequently highlighted underrepresented groups were parents/caregivers, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, older adults and people experiencing homelessness. Based on discussion about inclusive engagement and who is missing from public engagement, stakeholder groups interviewed by City staff acknowledged underrepresentation from many groups across San Diego, not just the ones they shared.

Findings from City Public Engagement Summaries

Demographic information from six engagement efforts across four recent citywide projects was analyzed to understand who had participated and how improvements can be made in future efforts to engage people who are underrepresented. Table 7 summarizes key information about the selected citywide projects.

Table 7 Citywide Engagement Sample

City Project	Engagement Type Analyzed[7]	Year	Number of Respondents	Languages Offered
Climate Resilient SD	Two surveys, one poll	2023	485	English
FY 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan	One survey	2023	605	English
Infrastructure Prioritization	One survey	2024	1,202	English, Spanish
Environmental Justice Element	One survey	2024	835	English

The analysis compared two commonly asked demographic categories against citywide demographic data published by the U.S. Census Bureau in the 2023 American Community Survey's 5-Year Estimates.

- Age range – The age range in which a respondent falls within.
- Race and/or ethnicity **–** The racial and/or ethnic group with which the respondent identifies.

All engagement efforts reviewed in this analysis included both demographic categories as questions. The following was found for the two demographic categories[i]:

- **Age range**
    - All six engagement efforts asked participants about their age range.
    - People between 35 and 40 years old answered with a slightly higher frequency than other age groups.
    - The fewest respondents were people who indicated an age of 24 or younger, followed by people older than 65.
        - Due to response category inconsistencies, exact proportions of participant age representation were not able to be determined.

[7] The survey and poll engagements from each project were chosen for this analysis because of their inclusion of demographic questions. Additional public engagements for each project were undertaken but are not included as a part of this analysis.

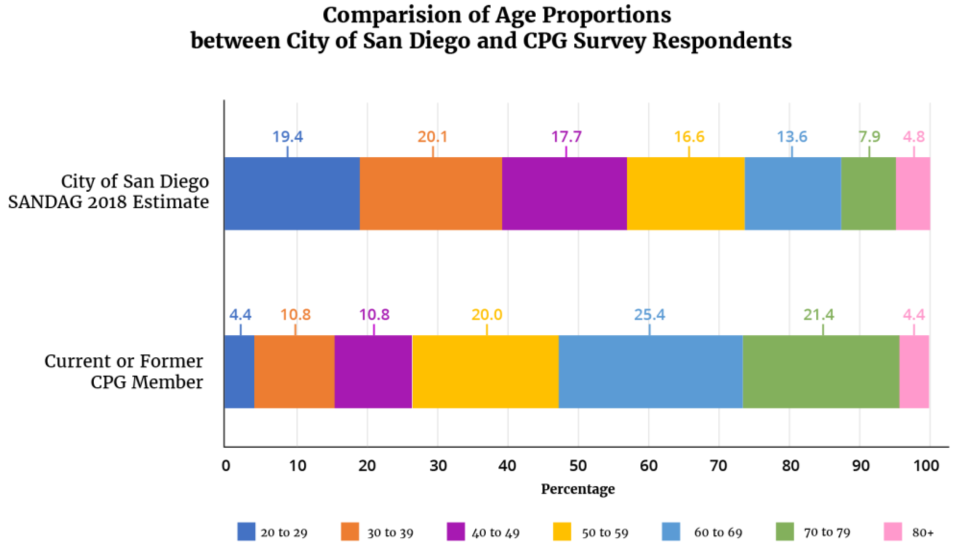
    However, people aged 24 or younger make up approximately 29 percent of the citywide population, so the low response count from that age group suggests underrepresentation in engagement.
    - Similarly, people aged 65 or older make up 14% of the citywide population. The moderate response count from that age group may suggest slight underrepresentation in engagement.
- **Race and/or ethnicity**
  - All six engagement efforts asked participants about their race or ethnic identity.
  - Most respondents identified as white/Caucasian, followed by people who identified as Hispanic or Latino.
  - However, when compared to the overall demographics of the City of San Diego proportionally, Asian, Black or African American, and Hispanic or Latino populations were underrepresented.

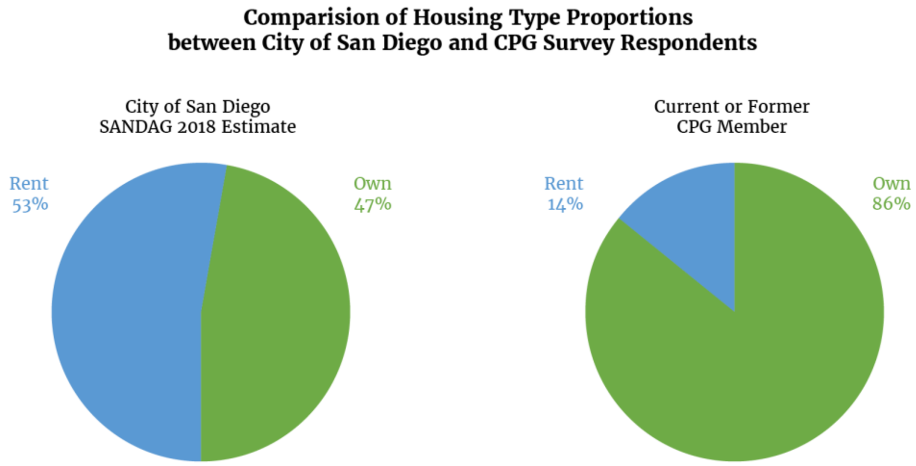
These efforts provide a small sampling of past citywide engagement and, therefore, only represent a historical snapshot of populations that participated in the City's public engagement efforts. However, using this information as a baseline, youth and older adult populations may need more support to engage with the City.

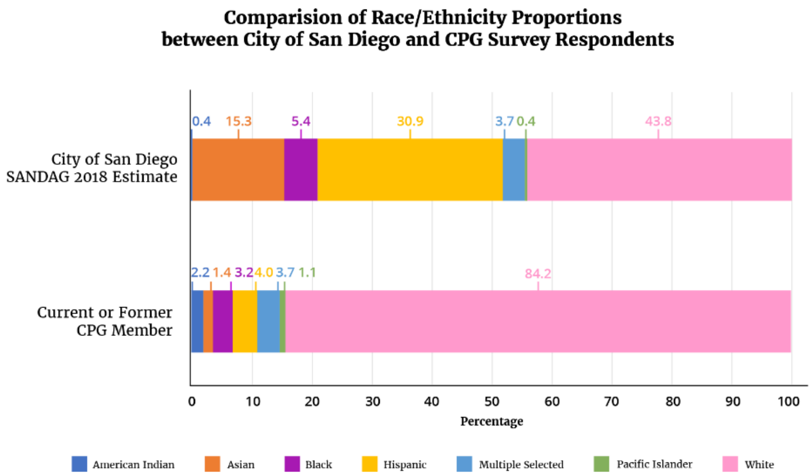
Planning Groups

Community involvement in planning has been long-standing in the City of San Diego. The City Council adopted policies in the 1960s and 1970s that established and recognized community planning groups as formal mechanisms for community input in the land use decision-making processes. The 41 recognized community planning groups provide community members with an opportunity for involvement in advising the City Council, the Planning Commission, and other decision-makers on development projects, general or community plan amendments, rezonings and public facilities.

In 2019, the City Planning Department shared an online survey with former and current planning group members, as well as the public, to determine how to enhance community engagement on land use matters. The survey collected demographics of planning groups, which were then compared to demographics gathered in a 2018 City of San Diego Resident Survey. Although the community planning group survey was not considered statistically valid and respondents self-selected, likely due to their involvement and strong interest in planning groups, it offered insight into the point-in-time makeup of community planning groups.


Comparision of Age Proportions
between City of San Diego and CPG Survey Respondents
City of San Diego
SANDAG 2018 Estimate
19.4
20.1
17.7
16.6
13.6
7.9
4.8
Current or Former
CPG Member
4.4
10.8
10.8
20.0
25.4
21.4
4.4
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percentage
20 to 29
30 to 39
40 to 49
50 to 59
60 to 69
70 to 79
80+


Comparision of Housing Type Proportions
between City of San Diego and CPG Survey Respondents
City of San Diego
SANDAG 2018 Estimate
Rent
53%
Own
47%
Current or Former
CPG Member
Rent
14%
Own
86%


Comparision of Race/Ethnicity Proportions
between City of San Diego and CPG Survey Respondents
City of San Diego
SANDAG 2018 Estimate
0.4
15.3
5.4
30.9
3.7
0.4
43.8
Current or Former
CPG Member
2.2
1.4
3.2
4.0
3.7
1.1
84.2
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
Percentage
American Indian
Asian
Black
Hispanic
Multiple Selected
Pacific Islander
White

Based on this self-reporting, a lower proportion of community planning group respondents were renters, lived in multi-unit homes (apartments, condominiums, duplexes, etc.), identified as female or identified as American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, or multiracial than the city's total population. Planning group respondents also had lower proportions of younger people than the overall city population. These data suggest that underrepresented populations within planning groups could include young people, renters, women and people of color.

To the greatest extent possible, community planning group members should be representative of the population of the communities they represent so that decision-makers can have confidence that the planning group represents a full range of interests in the community as addressed in Council Policy 600-24. In 2022, the City Council updated Council Policy 600-24 to further address community planning group roles and responsibilities with respect to inclusive public participation. The changes to Council Policy 600-24 focused on improving transparency, broadening community representation and reflecting planning groups' legal status as independent organizations. Planning groups were asked to consider designating seats for renters, stakeholders and business representatives to ensure voting members are representative of the broader community, and to collect demographic data of existing and new planning group voting members and the community at large and submit to the City as part of its annual report.

Stakeholder Advocacy Groups Analysis

Stakeholder advocacy groups represent the interests of specific communities and causes, and work to influence decisions that affect their members and constituencies. These groups champion policies and projects that align with their causes and may also provide services and/or resources.

The presence or absence of these groups may show how well certain communities are represented within the city. Communities or causes that are not represented by an advocacy group may have less ability to make their voices heard by decision-makers.

This analysis identifies nonprofit advocacy groups in the city and examines which communities or causes have advocacy representation. It highlights potential gaps in representation. By understanding the advocacy landscape, the City can improve outreach to support the inclusion of underrepresented voices in decision-making.

Methodology

The City conducted a frequency analysis using stakeholder information from readily accessible data sources. These sources include existing stakeholder lists provided by several City departments and public documentation of stakeholders who have participated in past City projects. Another source used was the San Diego Union-Tribune's online nonprofit database of all registered 501(c)(3) nonprofits within San Diego derived from IRS data. Staff also researched each community or cause (represented by keywords below) to capture any additional organizations representing those causes that may exist within San Diego. The analysis treated all organizations equally without considering their staff capacity, funding or influence. Some organizations may have abundant staff and resources to manage several advocacy initiatives, while others may be smaller or have a narrower focus. The analysis focused on the number of advocacy groups addressing different keywords rather than comparing the actual impact of advocacy groups.

Staff analyzed nonprofit advocacy groups to assess their representation across categories and keywords. The creation of 18 distinct categories and 133 keywords was informed by sources such as the U.S. Census and research institutes, as well as input from City subject matter experts. These categories and keywords best reflect advocacy areas relevant to the City's policy work. Where possible, reputable sources were used to develop standardized definitions. A full list of categories and keywords is provided in Table 8 below.

A total of 1,625 organizations were assessed, and 683 advocacy-related groups (tagged "P" indicating policy advocacy or "PS" indicating both policy advocacy and service providers) were identified for further analysis. Each organization was categorized based on its publicly available online presence to determine if it was involved in advocacy. Advocacy groups were identified based on published advocacy work, demonstrated support for specific populations and public education shared about advocacy topics. If an organization's advocacy efforts were unclear based on publicly available information, it may have been placed in the Service or Other categories. Table 9 shows the distribution of organizations by classification: Policy, Policy/Services, Services and Other.

Table 8 Categories, Keywords and Definitions

Keyword Definitions	
Age Groups	
Early Childhood	From conception through age 8.
Preadolescents	Ages 9-11.
Youth	Ages 12-26.
Adults	Ages 27-64.
Older Adults	Ages 65+.
Arts, Heritage & Culture	
Arts & Culture	Promoting awareness, investment, and access to arts and culture and making creativity an integral part of the city.
Historic Preservation	Preserving and promoting education about cultural heritage in the built environment, such as historic buildings, parks, plazas, or natural features.
Civil Status	
Married or Other Union (no dependents)	Two people in households with no dependents. E.g. married couples, civil union couples, registered partnerships, etc.
Married-Couple Household (with dependents)	Married couples in households with one or more dependents. E.g. married couples, civil union couples, registered partnerships, etc.
Cohabitating Couple Household (with dependents)	Two people in households with one or more dependents. E.g. civil union couples, registered partnerships, etc.
Single Parent/Guardian Household (with dependents)	Includes households with only one adult (parent, guardian, custodian or family member) providing care for one or more dependents. This includes single-parent households.
Single	No dependents; includes never married, widowed and divorced.
Community Support	
Equity and Social Justice	Racial, gender and income equity, among other related advocacy areas. Includes equity of City access, assets, neighborhoods and processes.
Place-based	Advocacy work for a specific geographic location, such as a community(ies), neighborhood(s), or Council district(s).
Civic Participation	Increasing opportunities for and improved quality of public participation in government decision-making, including voting rights.
Economic Development	
Entrepreneurship	Policies and programs oriented toward the success of startup businesses.
Job Training	Workforce development, including training programs, internships, externships and apprenticeships.
Jobs Access	Increasing opportunities for more and new jobs.
Small Businesses	Programs and policies toward supporting, developing and promoting small businesses.

Keyword Definitions	
Trade and Commerce	The exchange of goods and services in the community. This includes subtopics like banking, subsidies and buying/selling.
Unemployment	Policies and programs to address unemployment rates and unique challenges of people who experience unemployment.
Education	
Early Learning	Daycare through preschool.
K-12	Kindergarten through grade 12.
Trade School	Vocational postsecondary education offering specific job-focused training.
College	College-equivalent education programs. This includes community colleges and universities. It may award bachelor's degrees, professional certificates and/or credentials.
Graduate	Education opportunities after college-obtained degrees equivalent to bachelor's degrees. E.g., master's, doctorate and post-doctorate opportunities.
Environment	
Air Quality	Emission of toxic air pollutants and their effect on human health and the ecosystem.
Climate Change	Long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns, such as global warming, the greenhouse effect and associated natural disasters. It also includes actions to mitigate, adapt and build resilient human ecosystems.
Environmental Education and Access	Awareness of impacts on the environment and fostering more opportunities to increase healthy access to the environment.
Environmental Justice	Equity focus on environmental issues like air quality, reducing pollution exposure, noise pollution, water quality, promoting public facilities, food access, safe and sanitary homes, and physical activity.
Pollution Control	Preventing and managing pollution such as through community clean-up events, advocating for stricter regulations, and promoting sustainable practices among residents and businesses. It also includes issues like effectively addressing littering and chemical spills.
Sustainable Agriculture	Environmentally friendly farming strategies and topics like urban community gardening and locally sourced food.
Sustainable Technologies	Implement technologies and practices that reduce environmental impacts. This includes other subtopics like zero net and renewable energy, building decarbonization and consideration of natural resources.
Urban Forestry	Increasing the urban tree canopy, maximizing the efficiency of maintaining the benefits of trees and minimizing the risk of trees in the urban environment to improve the quality of city residents.
Water Quality and Conservation	Watersheds, groundwater, aquifers, and surface water bodies, including issues, policies and regulations that impact water quality and water availability (sustainable water sources).

Keyword Definitions	
Wildlife and Habitat Conservation	Protecting local natural resources which may include, but are not limited to, geological features, flora and wildlife.
Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation	
Male	People who identify as males.
Female	People who identify as females.
LGBTQIA+	People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or questioning their gender), intersex, asexual, (or their allies).
Non-binary	People who do not identify as exclusively male or female.
Health & Wellness	
Physical Health	Physical well-being and the treatment or management of disease.
Mental Health	Psychological, emotional and social well-being.
Public Health	Topics related to promoting and protecting the health of all people and the community. It also covers infectious diseases and other diseases at risk of becoming widespread or causing a public health emergency.
Family and Maternal Health	Promotion and maintenance of mother and child's health before and during pregnancy and throughout the child's development. This also includes family planning, birth, reproductive health issues and all pediatric care.
Substance Use Disorders	Policies and/or programs to address unhealthy use patterns of intoxicating substance(s).
Disabilities	Physical, intellectual, learning, sensorial and other types of disabilities.
Food Access and Nutrition	Promotes access to and awareness of healthy and balanced diets, addressing issues like food deserts, lack of access to fresh food, malnutrition, hunger, and famine.
Physical Activity/Recreation	Promotes access to and awareness of the benefits associated with exercise and an active lifestyle.
Income & Wealth[8]	
Extremely Low, Very Low and Low Capital	~$20,797 household income and/or between $4,900 and $23,790 median net worth, ~$59,609 household income and/or between $23,790 and $53,830 median net worth, ~$98,969 household income and/or between $53,830 and $127,900 median net worth.
Moderate Capital	~$152,324 household income and/or between $127,900 and $484,200 median net worth.
High Capital	~ ≥$330,968 household income and/or ≥$484,200 median net worth.
Industry	

[8] These income ranges are based on Mean Household Income of Quintiles collected by the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2022. Household income levels are divided into five sections, with the lowest earning fifth of the population falling in the "Lowest Quintile," and the highest earning fifth of the population falling in the "Highest Quintile" with the populations in between divided among the "Second, Third and Fourth Quintiles." The net worth ranges were collected from Table 1, "Median Value of Assets for Households, by Type of Asset Owned and Selected Characteristics" of the 2022 Wealth Table by the Census. The net worths used are the "Net worth (Excluding Equity in Own Home)" which were organized by the income quintiles.

Keyword Definitions	
Aerospace	Aviation and space technology.
Affordable Housing Development	Development of affordable homes.
Agriculture	Cultivation of crops and animals for consumption.
Airport	Public and private airports.
Aviation	Business, general and military aviation.
Cannabis	Production facilities, retail outlets, delivery and enforcement against illicit market.
Cargo and Freight	Transportation of sellable goods.
Childcare	Supervision and care of those under the age of 18.
Clean Energy	Solar, wind, hydropower and other forms of safe renewable energy.
Commercial/Retail	Shops and stores, malls, cafes, bars and restaurants, etc.
Construction	Interests of project developers, contractors, construction industry workers and design and engineering professionals.
Creative	Business enterprises ranging from digital media and music to visual and performing arts, architecture, interior design and fashion.
Defense/Military	Armed forces, weapons and technology.
Entertainment	Theme parks, theaters, event venue, night clubs, etc.
Fossil Fuels	Oil and natural gas.
Government	Law enforcement, infrastructure, transit, public education, etc.
Healthcare	Hospitals, clinics, therapy and wellness centers, etc.
Hotel and Lodging	Resorts, hotels, motels, extended-stay suites, short-vacation rentals, etc.
Housing Development	Development of residential units (excluding affordable homes).
Industrial	Light and heavy industrial. Examples are business parks, warehouses, research and development facilities, office buildings, showrooms, data centers, manufacturing buildings, etc.
Information and Communications Technologies	Radio, television, internet, cellphones, computers, software, cybersecurity, etc.
Innovation	Small, early-stage companies designed for fast growth.
Janitorial	Maintaining, upkeeping and cleaning of common-use and private facilities.
Law/Legal	Legal services for criminal, corporate, family, patent, real estate, tax, etc.
Life Sciences	Biotechnology, medical devices and pharmaceuticals.
Manufacturing	Transformation of raw materials into finished goods.
Medical	Health and wellness services for preventative, curative and palliative care.
Philanthropy/Financing	Charitable giving to other non-profits or services that benefit society.
Real Estate Development	Building, renovation and sale or lease of property.
Restaurant	Cafes, bars and restaurants.
Science	Research and use of scientific technology.
Tourism	Travel and hospitality.
Justice System & Public Safety	

Keyword Definitions	
Civil Rights/Liberties	Policies and/or programs to protect human rights and address violations, such as discrimination, invasion of privacy, freedom of speech infringements, etc.
Victim Assistance	Justice and fair compensation to victims of criminal activities.
Crime Prevention and Intervention	Programs and strategies to deter and address criminal activity, such as human trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, gang prevention and intervention, gun violence prevention among others.
Criminal Justice Reform	Re-entry, diversion, policing practices, penal code and sentence reform and expungement, among others.
Labor Rights	
Benefits and Wages	Paid leaves, healthcare, pension, retirement, insurance, fair labor standards, salary, tips and other types of wages. It also addresses issues like wage theft, equal pay and labor policy.
Occupational Safety and Health	Policies to promote healthy and safe work environments.
Legal Status	
Noncitizen	A person not a citizen or national of the United States.
Immigrants	This section includes people with any immigration status or those seeking to obtain one. It includes topics such as immigration reform, citizenship pathways and visa access programs for people seeking to obtain immigration status.
Refugees	People who have been displaced from their country of origin because of war, persecution, violence or natural disasters. This also includes asylum seekers currently residing in the city who are seeking refugee status.
Tribal	Members enrolled in a federally recognized tribe.
Veterans	People who served in the active military, naval, air or space service and have a veteran status.
Living Arrangement	
Mobile Home	People living in mobile homes, manufactured homes and trailer park communities.
Multiple Home Development	People living in condos and apartments.
Assisted Living	People living in nursing homes or other assisted living facilities.
Renters	Tenants who live in any type of a rented property.
Senior Housing	Senior housing and facility developments. Advocacy work for 55+ communities.
Single Room Occupancy	People who live in a single room occupancy unit.
Single Home	Single-family residential home communities or single-home development.
Student Homes	Development and promotion of student housing, on-campus and off-campus.
Unsheltered	People living in motor homes, cars and shelters on the street.
Veteran Homes	The upkeep and development of homes for US veterans, as well as housing assistance programs.
Live Outside the City	People who live outside city limits, but work or study in the city.

Keyword Definitions	
Race & Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska Native	A person with origins in the indigenous peoples of North, Central or South America who maintains cultural identity through tribal affiliation or community ties.
Asian	A person with origins in the indigenous populations of the Far East, Southeast Asia or the Indian Subcontinent, including regions such as Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.
Black or African American	A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
Country-specific	Specific national origins.
Hispanic-origin/Latino or Latina	An individual of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South American, Central American or other Spanish-speaking cultural or ethnic background, regardless of race.
Middle Eastern/North African	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Western Asian, the Middle East or North Africa.
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa or other Pacific Islands.
Some Other Race or Multiracial	An individual who does not associate with one of the above-listed races or has origins from a combination of these races.
White or Caucasian	A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa.
Services & Infrastructure	
Digital Equity	Equitable strategies to increase access to high-speed Internet services. Topics may include but are not limited to public Wi-Fi services, broadband Internet access, optic fiber or 5G network infrastructure. It also advocates for programs to facilitate computer access, typically in low-income communities.
Parks and Open Space	Maintenance and development of pocket, neighborhood and regional parks, as well as the upkeep and creation of new open space and trail networks.
Public Facilities and Spaces	Plazas, libraries, community and recreation centers and other public buildings.
Recycling and Composting	Sustainable waste management for organic and inorganic residues.
Streets and Right-Of-Way Maintenance	Road infrastructure projects related to street paving, modernization of street lighting, surveillance equipment, etc.
Stormwater	Providing clean waterways and flood-safe communities through stormwater best management practices, maintaining efficient infrastructure (channels, pipes, drains), restoring waterways, floodplain management and creating multi-benefit green infrastructure projects.
Universal Design	Ensuring that all people can access the built environment and products to the greatest extent possible.
Utilities	Public utilities such as gas, electricity, telecommunications, etc.
Waste Management and Collection	Solid waste reduction, management and collection practices.

Keyword Definitions	
Water and Wastewater Management	Sewage, potable water, pollution and reuse advocacy work. It also includes topics like blackwater and greywater management.
Transportation, Mobility & Parking	
Accessible Design	Physically accessible buildings, facilities and programs for people with disabilities
Bicycling	Bicycling infrastructure, routes, plans and awareness.
Curbspace and Parking Management	Efficient use of parking spaces. It can include but not be limited to topics like parklets, outdoor dining programs, parking enforcement, etc.
Electric Vehicles	Electric cars, buses, trains and other transportation systems. Other topics may also include transit electrification, policies for charging stations, and the safe and responsible disposal of EV waste components.
Micromobility	Alternative forms of mobility, such as electric scooters, pedicabs and neighborhood shuttles.
Public Transit	Efficient and affordable public transit systems, like buses and light rail.
Rideshare	Circulators, taxis, and Transportation Network Companies.
Safe Streets	Accident prevention and road fatality reduction strategies, such as traffic-calming strategies and Vision Zero.
Walkability	Sidewalks and right-of-way improvements, infrastructure and services within walking distance and more walkable communities.

Table 9 Organization Classification

Classification	Abbreviation	Definition	Example	Total
Policy	P	Organizations that were found only to advocate.	A water advocacy group: Advocates for water conservation.	150
Policy/Service	PS	Organizations that provide services and advocate.	A park-focused nonprofit: Advocates for more and better parks, and provides services such as establishing community gardens and planting trees.	533
Service	S	Organizations that purely provide services.	A food bank: Provides food and meals to low-income individuals and families.	618
Other	O	Organizations that cannot be captured in the above categories.	Sports associations: clubs for youth and adults to play sports	348

The analyzed advocacy groups were assigned to at least one and up to four categories and up to five keywords per category. Many groups were found to be associated with multiple categories and keywords, as they represent multiple interests and keywords.

Organizations with incomplete information, those found to be permanently closed or those belonging to the “Not Included” categories listed below were excluded from the assessment. These categories were excluded so that the list of advocacy groups would be unaffiliated with the organization and focus on the tangible communities or causes of San Diego as they relate to City decision-making.

Not included:

- Private or for-profit organizations, such as corporations and businesses.
- Organizations whose operations and interests lie outside the city's boundaries
- Political parties
- Groups affiliated with or recognized by the City, including:
    - Boards and commissions
    - Working groups
    - Community planning and recreation groups
    - Business improvement districts, maintenance assessment districts and community parking districts
- Organizations focused on issues that are typically outside the purview of City policy, such as:
    - Animal rescue and animal biology
    - Space exploration, education or observation
    - Homeowners associations
    - Parent-teacher associations and organizations
- Organizations with a core mission unrelated to advocacy, including:
    - Primarily research-focused organizations
    - Foundations or committees whose sole purpose is organizing events
    - Foundations or committees whose sole purpose is related to grants, fellowships and scholarships
    - Theme Parks /Entertainment Venues/Theaters/Museums
    - Churches, Synagogues and Religious Centers
    - Government Entity/Agencies (Local, Regional, State, Federal)
    - Hospitals and Clinics
    - Universities, Schools, School Districts or Colleges
    - Vocational/Trade Schools
- Organizations with unconfirmed operational status
    - Library clubs
    - Student or alumni-run organizations and clubs

Results

Table 10 shows the frequency with which each keyword was found to have an advocacy group.

City staff defined "low advocacy" as keywords associated with three or fewer advocacy groups. This threshold was chosen based on the distribution of keyword frequencies and selecting the lowest twenty percent, which were calculated to be those with no more than three advocacy groups represented. In addition, advocacy often relies on collaboration. While a single group operates in isolation and two or three may form a small alliance, four or more groups may start to create a network. Thus, four or more groups may suggest a stronger, more organized movement, whereas three or fewer may indicate limited advocacy.

This analysis focuses only on the frequency with which keywords are associated with advocacy groups. It is important to note that the number of advocacy groups focusing on a particular keyword may not necessarily correlate with the level of representation for that community or cause. For example, staff found only one advocacy group for "White/Caucasian" individuals within the city. However, this group makes up 50.4% of the city's population and has historically been well-represented within the City's committees, planning groups and decision-making.

Similarly, a high frequency of advocacy groups for a given community or cause (represented by a keyword) does not necessarily mean those groups are being adequately engaged; rather, it may indicate that they have organized to amplify their voices due to a lack of power in traditional decision-making processes.

Keywords can also be intersectional, as community members may be represented by multiple categories. For example, while the keywords "Single," "Male" and "High Capital" were each addressed three or fewer times in this analysis, individuals in those categories are likely captured under other keywords. For instance, a "Single" person may identify as "Female," which has 27 advocacy groups, or a "Male" may be "Black or African American," which has 31 advocacy groups within the city.

Keywords with fewer advocacy counts in this analysis may be better represented by "Service" or "Other" organizations. Staff found 29 "Service" or "Other" organizations, compared to 12 "Policy" or "Policy/Service" organizations that serve the nearly 73,000 veterans living within the city of San Diego.

This analysis only addresses local advocacy groups. The absence or a minimal number of local advocacy organizations for a keyword does not necessarily indicate a lack of power to influence decisions. Some keywords with limited local advocacy representation may have greater presence at the state or federal levels, eliminating the need for a local group with the same function. For example, the "Fossil Fuel" industry is only represented once in this local analysis but is known to consistently advocate through state and national organizations like the American Petroleum Institute, as well as by private industry. Similarly, the California-based organization Rideshare Drivers United advocates for “Rideshare” drivers as does the national organization Rideshare Advocate Group, potentially filling the gap in local representation for “Rideshare” advocacy.

While these caveats may suggest that some local advocacy groups are adequately represented through other means, other keywords appearing infrequently may be experiencing gaps in representation. For example, while there are over 20 “Trade Schools” in San Diego, these institutions and their communities are represented by only two advocacy groups. Similarly, there were approximately 4,872 “Mobile Homes” identified within the city of San Diego in 2023. Yet, this analysis identified only two local advocacy groups championing the production and residents of “Mobile Homes.” Furthermore, several other keywords, including (but not limited to) “Accessible Design,” “Childcare” and “Recycling and Composting,” may indicate a gap in representation in local decision-making.

Table 10 Keyword Occurrence (Organized in Categories by Frequency)

Categories	Keywords	# of Individual Advocacy Groups that Address the Topic
Age Groups	**Total**	**76**
	Youth	53
	Preadolescence	38
	Early Childhood	22
	Older Adults	22
	Adults	17
Arts, Heritage and Culture	**Total**	**65**
	Arts & Culture	53
	Historic Preservation	22
Civil Status	**Total**	**10**
	Single Parent/Guardian Household (With Dependents)	8
	Cohabitating Couple Household (With Dependents)	6
	Married-Couple Household (With Dependents)	6
	Married or Other Union (No Dependents)	3
	Single	2
Community Support	**Total**	**144**
	Place-based	89
	Civic Participation	64
	Equity and Social Justice	36
Economic Development	**Total**	**57**
	Trade and Commerce	27
	Jobs Access	24

	Job Training	18
	Small Businesses	16
	Entrepreneurship	13
	Unemployment	4
Education	**Total**	**50**
	K-12	40
	College	9
	Early Learning	7
	Graduate	4
	Trade School	2
Environment	**Total**	**133**
	Wildlife and Habitat Conservation	60
	Climate Change	50
	Environmental Justice	29
	Environmental Education and Access	24
	Sustainable Technologies	14
	Water Quality and Conservation	13
	Sustainable Agriculture	11
	Air Quality	8
	Pollution Control	7
	Urban Forestry	5
Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation	**Total**	**39**
	Female	27
	LGBTQIA+	12
	Non-binary	6
	Male	3
Health and Wellness	**Total**	**88**

	Food Access and Nutrition	23
	Mental Health	20
	Disabilities	16
	Physical Health	16
	Physical Activity/Recreation	13
	Substance Use Disorders	9
	Family and Maternal Health	6
	Public Health	3
Income and Wealth	**Total**	**32**
	Extremely Low, Very Low, and Low Capital	32
	Moderate Capital	5
	High Capital	3
Industry	**Total**	**176**
	Affordable Housing Development	35
	Housing Development	19
	Clean Energy	18
	Construction	17
	Law/Legal	16
	Government	13
	Healthcare	13
	Life Sciences	11
	Medical	11
	Philanthropy/Financing	11
	Creative	9
	Real Estate Development	9
	Information and Communications Technologies	8

	Innovation	8
	Science	8
	Manufacturing	7
	Agriculture	5
	Entertainment	5
	Aviation	4
	Cannabis	4
	Commercial/Retail	4
	Defense/Military	4
	Industrial	4
	Aerospace	3
	Childcare	3
	Fossil Fuels	3
	Hotel and Lodging	3
	Airport	2
	Restaurant	2
	Tourism	2
	Cargo and Freight	1
	Janitorial	1
Justice System and Public Safety	**Total**	**38**
	Civil Rights/Liberties	21
	Victim Assistance	16
	Crime Prevention and Intervention	8
	Criminal Justice Reform	6
Labor Rights	**Total**	**38**
	Benefits and Wages	35
	Occupational Safety and Health	30

Legal Status	**Total**	**36**
	Immigrants	16
	Refugees	13
	Veterans	11
	Noncitizen	8
	Tribal	8
Living Arrangement	**Total**	**40**
	Unsheltered	16
	Multiple Home Development	12
	Renters	12
	Single Home	10
	Senior Housing	6
	Assisted Living	4
	Single Room Occupancy	3
	Student Homes	3
	Mobile Home	2
	Veteran Homes	2
	Live Outside the City	1
Race and Ethnicity	**Total**	**111**
	Asian	46
	Black or African American	31
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	19
	Hispanic-origin/Latino or Latina	18
	Country-specific	16
	American Indian or Alaska Native	14
	Some Other Race (or Multiracial)	4
	Middle Eastern/North African	4

	White or Caucasian	1
Services and Infrastructure	**Total**	**48**
	Parks and Open Space	16
	Streets and Right-of-way Maintenance	11
	Digital Equity	8
	Public Facilities and Spaces	6
	Stormwater	6
	Universal Design	5
	Water and Wastewater Management	5
	Utilities	3
	Recycling and Composting	2
	Waste Management and Collection	2
Transportation, Mobility and Parking	**Total**	**27**
	Safe Streets	12
	Bicycling	7
	Micromobility	6
	Walkability	6
	Public Transit	5
	Curbspace and Parking Management	4
	Accessible Design	3
	Electric Vehicles	3
	Rideshare	1

IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Implementing Public Engagement is intended to guide staff on how they can conduct public outreach or engagement informed by the unique nature of their project.

While planning and implementing public outreach or engagement may seem daunting at first, by following the outlined steps, staff can more easily understand and implement an effective and inclusive participation process. The Steps for Conducting Effective Public Participation consist of eight steps:

1. **Plan Resources**
2. **Collect Baseline Data**
3. **Identify Stakeholders**
4. **Determine Level of Participation**
5. **Develop Project Communication Materials**
6. **Create and Implement a Public Engagement Plan**
7. **Report Back**
8. **Evaluate the Engagement Process**

These eight steps outline how to conduct public outreach and engagement from planning through evaluation. Note that steps one through five, as well as seven, should be conducted for projects at any level of public participation (including inform), while steps six and eight are only used when conducting public engagement (seeking public input on a decision). Staff should allocate time for management to review and approve each step. While these steps serve as a general guide, the City may not follow them in every instance—particularly for routine operations or urgent matters concerning public health and safety, where swift action is critical.

The Steps for Conducting Effective Public Participation provide useful considerations for public participation planning and advances the City's commitment to inclusion, transparency, clear communication and the engagement process.

Public engagement should be tailored to intended audiences or stakeholders. This section also provides recommendations and considerations for engaging diverse groups of people such as youth, immigrant communities, people with disabilities and older adults. By implementing tailored public engagement, staff can meet community members where they are to better include them in the decision-making process.

This section highlights other organizations or groups that staff can partner with to enhance the public outreach and engagement process. It is important to also foster ongoing relationships with these groups outside of project-specific objectives. By working with City Council Offices and boards and commissions, staff can adopt an informed approach to public engagement and leverage existing networks. In addition, external organizations such as neighborhood associations, planning groups, community-based organizations and businesses can also be helpful partners as they are often well-connected with community members and can support increased awareness of City projects.

Step 1: Plan Resources

This section provides an overview of identifying the purpose of and resources for public participation. Resource planning involves understanding the project's general timeline, available staff and funding. The following are key elements of resource planning:

Understanding objectives

- Understand the nature of the project. What is the overall objective of the project? *Is there a decision to be made or action to be taken that the public can influence?* If not, asking the public for their input will not be appropriate, but sharing information will. If there is a decision the public can influence, what is that decision? Identify the geographic area of the project.

Budget

- What funding sources are available, such as grants, internal budget allocations or donations?

Staffing and roles

- Decision-maker(s). Who is the ultimate decision-maker for the project? Will it be voted on by the City Council, is it subject to the Mayor's approval, or is it someone else? A project may have different decision-makers at different phases.
- Identify staff resources.
    - Which staff are available to support public participation? If resources allow, is the support of consultants/engagement partners anticipated and appropriate? Factor in time for the contracting process when determining the use of consultant/partner support.
    - Which members of the management/leadership team need to review and approve project communication materials and, if applicable, the public engagement plan?

Decision-making process

Understanding the high-level decision-making process and schedule that projects should follow is an important part of this first step.

- Is there a general timeline within which a decision needs to be made? Are there any regulatory or programmatic constraints affecting this (e.g. legislative requirements, grant deadlines)?
- What are the various stages of the project? At what stages can the public be engaged to provide the decision-maker(s) input that will help inform their decisions along the way? For example, an infrastructure project may include the following stages: Vision, Funding and Approvals, Detailed Design, Contractor Selection and Construction. Public input will support decision-making particularly during the initial Visioning and subsequent Design stages.

Step 2: Collect Baseline Data

This section provides an overview of how baseline data can be used to guide planning for inclusive public participation. Collecting baseline data includes studying background and context and researching demographic data.

Study background and context

It is important to be familiar with the relevant historical background, existing community assets and context of each project. The public may have already provided input for a similar project or related topic, and it is important to be familiar with and acknowledge previous input that has been shared. Additionally, dynamics such as current events and economic conditions may affect the perception of the project. Understanding this context can help to foster meaningful participation, inform the development of appropriate engagement techniques and help prepare for any conflict that could arise during public participation. Below are examples of information to look at when researching community background and context:

- Project origin: Understand any past actions or plans that prompted the project.
- City staff and City Council offices: Consider reaching out to relevant departments as staff can often contribute valuable institutional knowledge and help identify previous studies and reports. City Council offices can also help provide insight into community dynamics.
- Past news stories and press: News stories, both current and historical, can offer a glimpse into public perception, concerns and issues that have been highlighted over time. An internet search can provide valuable insights into current and past news articles related to the project area, shedding light on public priorities, controversies or notable events.
- Previous plans, studies and reports: Consider reviewing past documents such as community plans, master plans, story maps, priorities reports and engagement summaries from past projects to identify recurring themes and community comments. Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) can also contain significant information about the community and past public feedback.
- Past City hearings: Past City Council, Committee or Commission hearings on related or similar projects may include key input previously shared by the public.
- Ongoing projects and recent projects: Understand any major ongoing projects in the project area, including awareness campaigns, construction projects and other efforts.
- Other public agencies: Other public agencies regularly conduct public engagement and people may have provided input on similar or related projects recently or in the past. Check for publicly available summaries from relevant engagement events conducted by other public agencies. It may also be worth reaching out to partners

and key contacts at other agencies to learn about their public engagement experiences.

- Community meetings and events: Be aware of meetings, town halls and neighborhood gatherings to stay informed about current events, concerns and priorities within the project area.
- Ongoing media monitoring, online platforms and tools: Monitor local newspapers, online news outlets and social media platforms to stay updated on current events, developments and issues impacting the project area. Leverage online platforms and tools, such as community forums and neighborhood social media groups to gather insights into community dynamics and discussions.

Research demographic data

Demographics and statistics can help staff understand who lives in the project area and what their needs may be. Researching the demographic composition of a project area - including, but not limited to, age, gender, race, ethnicity and income - allows public participation to be tailored and provides a basis for effective communication across groups.

When researching demographics, it is important to use reliable, credible sources. The *Local Demographics* page provides U.S. Census data and information on how to access community-level data through SANDAG. If employing additional, external data, consider the credibility of a data source and the reputation of the data source publisher, the rigor and transparency of how it was collected, analyzed, and published, and its age in relation to the project. The geography of the data should be selected based off the project's area of impact.

Data analysis

City projects may vary in scope, scale and impact. As such, some projects may require more local geographic analyses to inform public participation. Analyzing data at the citywide level provides a broad overview of demographic trends and patterns. Zooming into smaller geographies such as census tracts or blocks offers more localized insights into community characteristics and needs. For projects that include a subarea of the City or a specific location, gather neighborhood or community plan area-level data from SANDAG's Open Data Portal.

Findings

After compiling and analyzing the data, decide whether to summarize, document and publish any findings or results. Findings should be summarized in a clear and concise manner.

Step 3: Identify Stakeholders

A stakeholder is any person, group or organization that project outcomes may impact. Stakeholders can influence a project and play an important role in its success.

Staff should identify potential stakeholders to make them aware of and/or invite their participation in the project. Identifying people who will be impacted directly and indirectly by the project and understanding their needs and expectations before the project starts will increase the chances of a successful outcome. Involving stakeholders can lead to a better public participation process and improved decisions.

Internal vs. external stakeholders

Stakeholders can be internal or external to a project. Internal stakeholders are people within the City organization who have a direct interest in the project due to their role, such as City departments and Council offices.

External stakeholders are people outside of the City organization with an interest in the project. External stakeholders may include community members, business groups, other public agencies and community organizations.

Considerations for identifying stakeholders

A focused effort should be made to identify a project's stakeholders to be able to invite their input or facilitate their awareness.

There are many ways to identify stakeholders, such as by organization type, interests, industry, demographics, occupation, where they live and more.

Understanding project impacts, benefits and challenges can help in identifying stakeholders and their possible perspectives.

Staff can also have early conversations with stakeholders as needed and reference previous projects to understand potential stakeholder perspectives and interests.

Step 4: Determine the Level of Participation

Staff can assess internal and external expectations for public participation to determine a project's level of public participation. When the City sets public participation expectations and communicates them, the public can understand how they can participate in a project.

How to determine the level of participation

Begin with determining the project's level of public participation using the Levels of Public Participation Worksheet, adapted from the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).[9] Staff should answer worksheet questions as objectively as possible. The level is chosen in consideration of:

- **Internal/City expectations**: These include factors such as legal requirements for participation and staff capacity.
- **External/public expectations:** These include factors such as the public's anticipated expectations for participation. Qualitative insights from *Step 3: Identify Stakeholders* can help staff understand public expectations.

Setting expectations for the chosen level of public participation enhances a project's transparency and demonstrates the City's commitment to the participation process. The determined level of public participation will inform the project's communication materials and engagement plan.

[9] International Association for Public Participation. (2016). Foundations in Public Participation: Planning for Effective Public Participation (p. 55).

Step 5: Develop Project Communication Materials

Public participation relies on sharing project information in a clear and understandable manner. Effective project communication includes three main steps: developing key messages, using the messages as the basis to develop communication materials and distributing the materials using multiple methods. For long-term projects, these steps may be repeated several times. Materials should also be revisited for any necessary updates after completion of Step 6, if applicable. Staff should work with their department's Public Information Officer throughout this process.

Develop key messages

Develop a few high-level messages about the goals of a project, why it matters to the public and the benefits of getting involved. These messages should use clear, simple and inclusive language that is easy to understand. Messaging should also clearly inform the public about their participation opportunities, if any.

For example, a key message for the Parks Master Plan was, "The Parks Master Plan strives to create an equitable park system so that everyone has equal access to safe, clean and thriving park spaces. The public can provide input to help identify priorities for park investments and their community's park and recreation needs."

For projects seeking public input, messaging should also clarify what other factors or constraints may influence the final decision besides public input. For example, a key message for the Chollas Creek Oak Park Trail is "Oak Park Trail is planned within an environmentally sensitive area, which means certain aspects of the trail—like its general route and width—are shaped by habitat protection guidelines. However, there are opportunities to shape the look and feel of the trail. Community input will help inform the design of features such as signage, landscaping, educational elements and amenities."

Create communication materials

After developing key messages, create communication materials. Communication materials can include flyers, webpages, fact sheets and a variety of other techniques. Developing communication materials can take considerable time depending on the material type and complexity of the project. Consider the following when creating communication materials:

- All materials should consider language access needs; provide translated materials as needed.
- Materials should follow document accessibility best practices.
- Materials should also include visual elements such as maps, diagrams, infographics, videos and photos, which can help make messages or complex information more engaging and easier to understand.

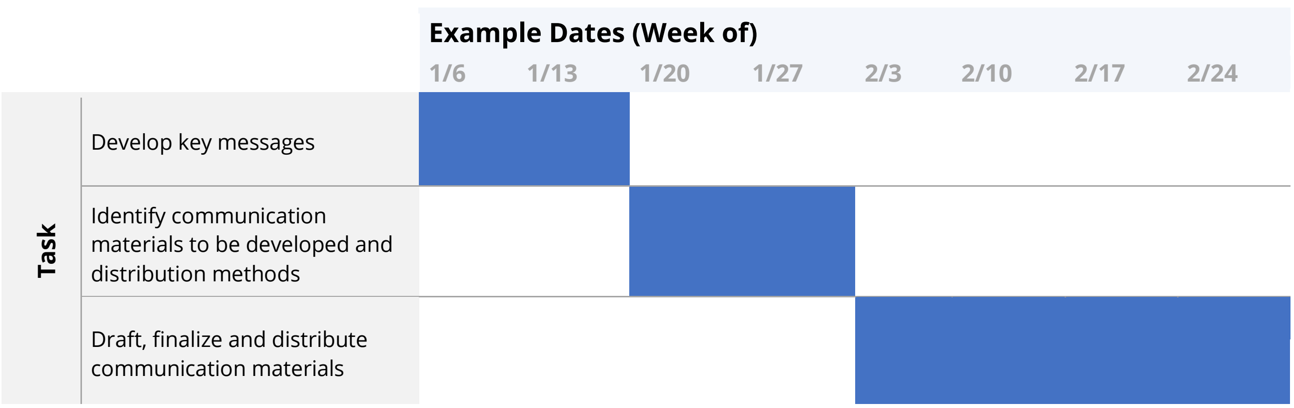
Distribute communication materials

Begin by developing a timeline for distributing communication materials. The distribution should coincide with project milestones, such as the project launch and drafts for public input. Consider the time needed to share information with key stakeholders.

- Share the materials using various outreach techniques (e.g. social media and webpages) for a broad reach.
- Share materials with the public and stakeholders.

Example timeline for developing communication materials

The approximations below can vary depending on the chosen communication materials.



Step 6: Create and Implement a Public Engagement Plan

Creating a public engagement plan clearly outlines opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process throughout the project's duration. In this step, use the stakeholders, baseline data and level of public participation identified in earlier steps to choose and implement engagement techniques.

Create a public engagement plan

Why create a public engagement plan?

The engagement plan helps establish a clear decision-making process for both staff and the public.

It determines how, where and when public engagement will occur. A transparent and well-executed engagement plan can foster a sense of public ownership in the project and build relationships between the City and the public.

How to create a public engagement plan

- Decide the engagement topics and questions. These may be distinct per stakeholder group, e.g. there may be different questions to ask youth as opposed to adults.
- Choose engagement techniques**.** Narrow down the list of potential engagement techniques so that the engagement plan is effective and realistic by considering the following:
  - Level of public participation: Techniques should advance the goals of the chosen level of public participation.
  - Reaching stakeholders: Think about where, when and how identified stakeholders are most likely to engage. Look for opportunities to integrate engagement into existing public events, or in coordination with organizations and community leaders that stakeholders are already engaged with.
  - Resource availability: Choose techniques that are feasible given the available staff capacity, budget and resources.
  - Project timeline and requirements: Chosen techniques should fit within the project's timeline and meet any legal or regulatory requirements.
  - Input format: Consider the desired format for capturing and reporting public input.
  - Participation options: Engagement plans should include options for different capacities for participation, such as for someone who can provide regular input over several months to someone who only has a few minutes to spare. Also consider options for sharing input in individual or group settings, so participants can choose settings most comfortable to them.

- Determine roles and allocate sufficient planning time. Decide who will lead the engagement process, identify the required number of staff to complete tasks and events and allocate sufficient planning time for successful execution. When planning an engagement technique, decide how the public will receive enough advance notice about engagement opportunities. For instance, if holding a focus group, staff may also plan to create flyers and social media posts to recruit participants.
- Develop an engagement timeline. A timeline helps staff meet major milestones and helps the public know when to anticipate engagement activities. It can also help build trust with the public by demonstrating a clear decision-making trajectory. Below is a list of key factors to consider when creating a project timeline that will be shared with the public. Graphic templates for timelines are available on CityNet.
    - Create the timeline: Outline all project phases, emphasizing when public outreach and engagement will occur. Clearly define the expected duration for each phase. Consider presenting specific milestones as seasons or years (e.g. spring 2026) rather than in a month/year format. Build in time to provide advance notice for any engagement events.
    - Set realistic expectations: Be cautious not to overestimate. Avoid committing to a timeline that may not be met.
    - Consider sharing the project timeline: The project timeline can be shared on the project webpage and in other outreach materials.

Event logistics plan

If engagement techniques that take the form of events are planned, staff can use a logistics plan to further organize the event's various components. Use the Event Logistics Plan Template to draft a plan. Event considerations can include:

- Date, time, location and staffing. Select locations, times and dates convenient to participants and avoid major holidays or conflicting community events. Assign roles based on staff strengths and availabilities. Roles may include:
    - Event staff:
        - Speakers for presentations and Q&A sessions
        - Primary facilitator
        - Additional facilitators and subject matter experts for any small group discussions or open house stations
        - Coordinator and contact for interpreter(s)
        - Notetakers for different activities (e.g., flip chart notetakers, notetakers who capture detailed notes, notetakers for breakout discussions)
        - Lead for audiovisual/computer system setup, testing and troubleshooting

- Supporting staff:
    - Materials manager, including collecting and packing materials and transporting them to and from the event site
    - Team for setting up and breaking down event
    - Greeters and sign-in table staff
    - Back-of-room manager to handle logistical needs during the event
    - Staff for refreshment table set-up and monitoring
    - Staff providing childcare, if applicable
    - Lead for collecting and digitizing all materials that contain public input.
- Venue-specific details such as:
    - Designating staff to pick up keys or meet with a facilities coordinator on-site
    - Transportation arrangements
    - Plan for setup and breakdown
- Materials. For each activity during the event, list the materials and equipment needed. Create or gather these materials.
    - Include a sign-in sheet to collect names and optional contact information of attendees to share project updates. Sign-in sheets should also include the field "How did you find out about this event?" to inform future engagement.
        - Sensitive information, such as attendees' demographics, is most appropriately collected in optional anonymous forms toward the end of events.
        - *To draw meaningful conclusions, demographic category response options during engagement should be identical to the way project area (e.g. citywide or community-level) actual demographics are reported.*

Implement a public engagement plan

Implement the engagement plan and ongoing project tasks
Once the engagement plan is created, it's time to implement it. Keep a list of communication materials that may need regular updates and monitoring, such as webpages and project timelines. Work with the department's Public Information Officer to update these items throughout implementation. Once these items are updated, link them on the project webpage and share them with interested stakeholders and partners.

Select tools for sharing information and keeping the public updated. Various communication channels can be used to update interested parties about engagement activities. Decide which tool(s) will be used to provide ongoing updates (e.g., email notifications), then share updates with the public when available.

Capture public input

Be sure to capture and record public input so that it can be used for project decision-making. Various methods, such as note-taking, audio recording, photos, videos and web-based meeting chat functions can be used to capture input. Having an online option, such as a project email address or online comment form, to provide feedback throughout the lifespan of the project is also recommended.

- Depending on the engagement technique or approach, staff should use a clear format for documentation so that input can be easily interpreted after the conclusion of the event.
  - If taking notes, consider establishing a standard form with clear headers for discussion topics or questions to guide note-taking.
  - Choose formats that are easily digitized for later analysis in tools such as Excel to streamline processes.

Gather feedback for improvement

Participant satisfaction surveys are a helpful way to capture feedback about the public's experience with an individual engagement event.

- These surveys typically cover satisfaction with an engagement event and the public's understanding of the provided information.
- Pass out and collect surveys at the end of engagement events or send event participants a digital survey when following up.
- Optionally include demographic questions to compare to project area demographics.
- Save responses soon after receiving them for easy access and assessment.

Share engagement findings and refine materials along the way

At key project milestones, share public engagement results with the public. For example, staff can update the project webpage with survey results after the survey period closes or create a report summarizing public input received during an initial visioning phase. Sharing findings can help the public understand the engagement that occurred and overall input the City received.

Staff can refine the project alternatives and materials based on public input and share them for further public review. This cycle of collecting input and updating project materials can be repeated throughout the public engagement process to capture more focused input at each stage of a project and demonstrate how input was considered.

If there is significant public interest in an engagement event that was conducted, consider creating and sharing an event summary. Event summaries are reports that note key themes of public input and can include:

- Event details (time, date and location)
- The methods staff used to notify the public about the project and engagement opportunities
- Event format and details (e.g. if there was a group discussion, include questions that were discussed)
- Input received and key themes
    - Redact personal information if sharing copies of public input.

Meet to discuss improvements
After implementing an engagement technique, meet internally to discuss successes and areas for continuous improvement.

Step 7: Report Back

In addition to following up and reporting back to stakeholders throughout the engagement process as recommended in Step 6, staff should report back after the City makes a final project decision, such as after a project has been considered by the City Council. This clearly communicates to the public how their input was considered in project decision-making. It also demonstrates that the City is listening and committed to inclusive public engagement.

The format of reporting back to participants depends on the project and level of public participation. When a project is focused primarily on providing information, a report back may summarize the public outreach that occurred. When projects include soliciting input and feedback to inform decisions, reporting back should also include a synthesis of themes and identification of how input was used.

How to report back to participants

- Report back to participants about the overall engagement conducted and input received. Consider the best format for sharing this with the public, such as making it a PDF or presentation.
- Analyze public input captured from engagement to identify topics, concerns, questions and ideas mentioned multiple times.
    - Understand that themes don't represent all stakeholders, and that all input needs consideration.
- Prepare a report back summary that may include the following:
    - Explanation of the project and decision-making process
    - Engagement details (e.g. engagement activities conducted, dates, locations, formats)
    - Number of participants engaged
    - Key themes of input received (distilled from verbatim input)
    - How public input influenced the project (including why any key input themes could not be used, if applicable)
    - Graphics
    - Appendix for engagement material (e.g. presentations, boards, handouts, forms)
    - Appendix for raw input received
- Publish the report back summary and share it with participants, stakeholders and partners through channels such as email notifications and project webpages.

Step 8: Evaluate the Engagement Process

Once the public engagement process for a project is completed, evaluate its success. Post-engagement evaluation allows staff to understand the success of the engagement conducted and improve on future engagement processes by tracking the metrics below.

Participant Experience

Surveys: Participant satisfaction surveys can be used to assess participants' experience. Questions may be open-ended to gather qualitative insights on participant experience or can use scales to provide quantifiable data that can be tracked across different engagements. Surveys can be distributed at the end of an engagement event or after an engagement process has concluded. Understand that the more controversial a project is, the more likely it is that public perceptions of the engagement event or process are impacted by bias or dissatisfaction with the project itself, despite efforts made toward inclusive and effective engagement.

Demographic Representativeness

Data analysis: Characteristics of participants can be compared to the known demographics of the project area to understand the engagement's representativeness.

> **Determining geographic scale**
>
> When deciding which geographic scale to use, consider the project's area of impact, for example citywide, neighborhood-level or site-specific. If assessing whether participants broadly reflect the city's demographics, use citywide data. For a community area, community plan areas or council districts may be the most appropriate. To find neighborhood area-level patterns, use census tract-level data. If insights about smaller areas around project sites are required, census block-level data can be used. In the instance that the project area does not neatly fit into its suggested geography, use the next boundary level up or down that is appropriate for the project. For example, if a project's impact is smaller than the community-level, tract-level information may be the most appropriate.

Below is a table with project types, examples and their suggested geographies.

Table 11 Geographic Scale Examples

Project Geography	Example	Suggested Geography for Comparison
Citywide	A citywide fee proposal	Citywide
Community area	A community plan update	Community plan area
Neighborhood area	Focused plan amendment	Census tract(s). Census tract boundaries may not align directly with neighborhood or community plan boundaries.
Site-specific projects	Park improvement	Blocks or block group(s)

To determine if the people who participated in an engagement process or event are representative of the project area's demographics, compare characteristics of the participation sample (like age, race, income level, etc.) to known demographics. Datasets from the U.S. Census and SANDAG will contain raw counts per demographic category, so when calculating demographic data to evaluate the engagement process, check that the data is being aggregated appropriately. This means:

- Demographic categories are the same between the Census or SANDAG data and the input choices from the engagement (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity categories, etc.)
- If demographic categories from the Census or SANDAG were aggregated, the ranges match the input choices from the engagement (e.g., age ranges, income bands, etc.)

While there are several different ways to assess how closely the demographics of an engagement represent the project area, there are two methods outlined below to help draw quick and insightful conclusions about participation:

- Visualinspection is a lightweight, descriptive statistical technique to assess data quickly and intuitively.
- Proportiontesting is a formal inferential statistical technique used to draw firm, rigorous conclusions about a set of data.

This section will briefly cover what each method is, the strengths and limitations of each, and which method to select based on what conclusions need to be drawn from the analysis.

Visual inspection

Visual inspection uses data visualizations (tables, charts, and graphs) to represent data to compare differences between groups or expectations visually. Participant demographics can be compared to the demographics of the city or a more specific geography.

Example: A bar chart shows the gender distribution of people who participated in a workshop as 40% female. After looking at U.S. Census data, it's found that the city population is 51% female. This shows that there's a difference between workshop participant demographics and the comparison group.

How to do it

- Gather data. Plan in advance for the engagement to collect optional demographic data from participants.

  Tip: To draw meaningful conclusions, demographic category response options during engagement should be identical to those of the selected comparison group (citywide or community-level).

- Find the project area data. See *Local Demographics* to gather citywide demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau or learn how to gather community-level demographic data from SANDAG.
- Choose the visualization format. Bar charts tend to work well for simple comparisons or few demographic categories. Tables work well when comparing multiple demographic characteristics at the same time.
- Plot side-by-side. Show the engagement group and the selected comparison group (citywide or community-level) proportions for each demographic category. Counts (the number of people in each category) and percentages can both be useful in understanding the composition of the groups.
- Inspect. Compare the percentages in each category between the engagement group and selected comparison group. Are they similar, or noticeably different? To what extent?

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Quick and intuitive**	• May miss small but important differences
• **Good for spotting large or obvious differences**	• Can be misleading if differences are not obvious or sample size is small
• **Ideal for exploration**	• Subjective – interpretations can vary
• **Easily understood by non-technical audiences**	

When to use visual inspection
Visual inspection is best for initial data review or high-level reporting. This can include:

- Summarizing participation of an engagement; determining if a more rigorous analysis is necessary.
- Creating presentations or slide decks with participation information.
- Communicating public engagement results to non-technical audiences.

Proportion testing
Proportion testing is a formal statistical method that checks whether the difference between groups is big enough to matter *mathematically*. It indicates (with a 'p-value' or a confidence interval) if the difference is statistically insignificant, likely due to random chance, or something meaningful, such as over- or underrepresentation.

Example: A proportion test is run, and it's found that the workshop participants are 40% female and therefore statistically significantly different from the 51% in the citywide population. That means the difference between the engagement group and the comparison group likely isn't just random.

How to do it

- Consult with Performance & Analytics**.** Rigorous statistical testing is best performed by individuals with the knowledge and training to do so. Citystaff can consult with the Performance & Analytics Department for additional details or assistance.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• **Objective, reproducible and quantifiable**	• Takes more time and tools
• **More precise - can help detect differences when visual patterns are subtle or ambiguous**	• Requires statistical knowledge and understanding to do correctly
• **Useful for high-stakes decision-making**	• Not always necessary - especially when the difference is so obvious that formal testing adds little value

When to use proportion testing

Proportion testing is more appropriate when a precise analysis is needed. If a conclusion could impact funding, policy, legal action or other major organizational decisions, the rigorous, defensible evidence of statistical testing may be preferred. Examples may include:

- Deciding on a major infrastructure investment
- Determining compliance with legal, audit, or policy requirements
- Writing formal reports where a high-level of accuracy and precision is expected

Reach

- Sign-in sheets: Sign-in sheets can quantify how many people attended an engagement event.
- Email notifications: Email notification metrics like number of opens and link clicks can be reviewed to understand digital reach. Additionally, staff can review email list sign-up form responses to quantify how many people demonstrated interest in a project.
- Social media or web impressions: The Department of Information Technology's Web Team and Communications Department can help acquire metrics related to engagement.
    - Work with the WebTeam for a report on webpage performance metrics such as page visits.
        - Knowing the sources of the page visits may also inform staff of engagement techniques that have acquired the most engagement.
    - Work with the Communications Department for a report on social media metrics like impressions and reach.

Quality of input

- Assess quality of input: Review input received for its quality through a content analysis. Identify quality by checking if sentiments and input themes are applicable to the project and specific enough to guide decision-making.

Additional evaluation considerations

- Internal and external check-ins: Check in with project staff and partners to:
    - Assess engagement strengths and areas for improvement
    - Summarize observations and collected opinions of the project and engagement activities
    - Make recommendations for future projects
- Press and media articles: Look for any articles or media that have been published about the project. Assess whether the tone of press coverage is positive or has suggestions for improvement and consider these for future projects.
- Other evaluation metrics: Other metrics to consider in evaluation include awards received, quality of partnerships formed, relationships improved and first-of-a-kind interactions, among others.

Levels of Public Participation

There are five equally important levels of participation that staff can use to define the public's role in a project's participation process: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. Staff should implement the level of participation that best suits the project's unique needs. Choosing a level of public participation is an important step of the Steps for Conducting Effective Public Participation because it helps staff set expectations and provides transparency for the public about their role in a project. Defining a level of participation allows the public to understand to what degree their input can influence project decisions. For the inform, consult, involve and collaborate levels of public participation, the City is the final decision-maker.

Figure 1: Public Participation Levels Wheel, adapted from IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

Inform

- The inform level of public participation is used to provide the public information about a project so that they can understand key details like what is happening, when and why.
- Examples:
    - The Environmental Services Department informed the public about the Organic Waste Recycling Program to help San Diegans understand how to recycle organic waste, using in-person and virtual information sessions. This program was required by California Senate Bill 1383.
    - The City created flyers and social media posts to increase awareness about the Get It Done app. The app helps people report problems related to City infrastructure and the public right-of-way, obtain information about City services and schedule appointments for services like passport renewal or household hazardous waste disposal.

The consult, involve, and collaborate levels below all include following up with the public about how their input influenced decisions.

Consult

- The consult level of public participation is used to collect feedback about different project alternatives, options or decisions. This level of public participation is typically conducted when there are constraints or parameters in the decision-making process that necessitate pre-defined options.
- Examples:
  - The Transportation Department held public meetings and used a survey to consult the public for the Utilities Undergrounding Program. Due to precise design parameters and regulations regarding buffer space, staff presented the public with pre-defined location alternatives for the placement of utility boxes, pedestals and transformers. The public ranked their prioritization of the presented underground locations at the meetings and through the survey.
  - The City Planning Department uses the Infrastructure Priorities Survey to consult the public on City infrastructure priorities and improvement ideas. Members of the public can rank their desired prioritization of infrastructure categories and suggest project ideas to the City. This project falls under the consult level because the City must factor in additional considerations besides public input when prioritizing these projects such as budgetary constraints, project readiness, project feasibility, legal compliance and alignment with adopted plans.

Involve

- The involve level of public participation is used to work with the public throughout the engagement process to ensure that public input is understood, considered and helps shape the decision-making process.
- Examples:
  - The City Planning Department involves community planning groups and members of the public in the development of a community plan update to see that the plans reflect ideas and feedback shared by community members. The City Planning Department works with community planning groups and members of the public throughout the update process by providing opportunities for visioning, sharing potential alternatives and soliciting feedback after publishing drafts.
  - The Small Business Advisory Board strategized with City staff about how they can support small businesses' public safety and maintain successful business environments. The Economic Development Department presented the board with a draft document of safety resources. Over several rounds of feedback and edits, the board and Economic Development Department published the final Safety Resource Toolkit for Small Businesses. Board members shared the toolkit with the business community to help small businesses keep their employees and customers safe.

Collaborate

- The collaborate level of public participation is used to partner with the public on each aspect of the decision-making process (defining the scope of the issue and potential solutions) and incorporate their recommendations into decisions as much as possible.
- Examples:
  - The City Planning Department collaborated with five community-based organizations to develop the City's General Plan Environmental Justice Element. At the beginning of the development of the Environmental Justice Element, the community-based organizations spoke with community members to identify the scope of their priorities related to environmental justice. Additionally, these community-based organizations identified opportunities to coordinate programs, co-conducted engagement to gather public input and advised staff on policy to advance environmental justice.
  - The Department of Information Technology collaborated with community members, small businesses and local organizations in the San Diego Promise Zone to increase access to the internet. San Diego Promise Zone community partners informed staff of challenging experiences locating internet at coffee shops and in public spaces. In response, the City hosted a series of workshops where community members and community-based organizations in historically underserved neighborhoods established principles for the City's Public Wi-Fi program and identified desired sites for new services. The Department of Information Technology considered this input and installed new public Wi-Fi hotspots at the 19 sites recommended in the workshops as part of their SD Access 4 All initiative.

Empower

- The empower level of public participation is when the public directly decides the outcome for projects. Currently, the City most frequently empowers community members through voting, but the empower level of participation may be used in other ways for future projects.
- Example:
  - In 2008, San Diego voters approved Proposition D to make alcohol consumption unlawful at City beaches, Mission Bay Park and coastal parks, resulting in an the Municipal Code to ban alcohol consumption at City beaches, Mission Bay Park and coastal parks.
  - In 2022, San Diego voters approved Measure C to authorize the exclusion of the Midway-Pacific Highway community plan area from the 30-foot height limit, which resulted in the City adopting this exception to allow future projects to exceed 30 feet in height.

Metrics for Success

Metrics for success are indicators used to assess a project's effectiveness toward the goals of inclusive public engagement. Understanding the success of project engagement can help the City make efforts toward continuous improvement. The indicators defined in this section serve to evaluate the impact, process and performance of public engagement. To see more specific recommendations for post-engagement evaluation, reference *Step 8: Evaluate the Engagement Process*.

Indicators

Participant experience

This indicator evaluates the public's experience with a project's engagement process.

Why	Understanding participant experience helps the City create accessible engagement plans that acknowledge community members' voices.
How	Assess participant satisfaction using participant satisfaction surveys, discussed in *Step 6: Create and Implement a Public Engagement Plan*, and *Step 8: Evaluate the Engagement Process*.

Demographic representation

Demographic representation evaluates the degree to which participant demographics match the demographics of the project's impact area. Local demographics can be used as benchmarks to compare with participant demographics.

Why	Demographic representation provides a fuller picture of the public's experiences and priorities, allowing diverse perspectives and backgrounds to be considered when the City makes decisions. If the demographic proportions of the people who participated in a project are significantly different than the project area's population, it may mean that some voices were missed and/or that others are over-represented, which is relevant information for a decision-maker to consider.
How	Staff should seek to engage participants who represent the demographics of the project's impact area, e.g. the entire city or a specific community. Measure participant demographics against the project area's demographics. • A project's participant demographics may not immediately match the actual project area demographics, but over time, staff should seek continued improvement.

Reach

Reach is the number of people who became aware of or engage in a project.

Why	Reaching a broad swath of people affected by a project promotes inclusion in the engagement process so that the public has ample opportunity to become aware of and/or participate in decision-making.

How	• Assess in-person reach by reviewing sign-in sheets, sign-up forms and comment cards.
	• Review digital engagement such as social media reach, paid or earned media impressions, email open and click-through rates and project webpage views.
	    ○ For social media or earned media, work with the Communications Department to gather reports on impressions/views.
	    ○ Work with the Web Team to gather webpage analytics such as page visits.

Quality of input

This indicator evaluates the degree to which public comments are focused to the project's input areas and can therefore be used to help inform decision-makers.

Why	Assessing quality of public input helps determine whether clear objectives and parameters for participation were effectively provided.
How	• Track all public input in an organized manner. Once the public input period is complete, conduct a content analysis. ○ If responses are not focused to the topics at hand, evaluate how project overviews, prompts or questions can be more straightforward for the next project.

Engaging Children & Youth

Know beforehand

The youth population in the city of San Diego is approximately 408,000, or 29% of the city's total population. There are approximately 143,000 children under the age of 10, approximately 159,000 youth between the ages of 10 and 19, and 106,000 young adults between the ages of 20 and 24. (*2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, U.S. Census Bureau).

According to the San Diego Unified School District, approximately 27% of students enrolled in the District are English language learners, 59% are eligible for free or reduced meals for low-income families, 14% receive Special Education services, and 8% come from military families.

Build long-term partnerships with schools and organizations that work with youth. City staff may best be able to access youth through partners who have an existing foundation of trust and rapport with the youth, as well as prior knowledge of the youth population to support authentic connections and engagement. Below are important considerations in approaching partners in advance of working with youth.

- School personnel and community-based organizations (CBOs) often have many priorities but limited capacity. Be efficient and organized in meetings, communications and program implementation. Be flexible in scheduling and willing to adapt content where possible.

In light of San Diego's diverse landscape, youth engagement requires unique considerations. Some youth-specific questions to ask:

- Are there any Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or youth with disabilities or behavior differences? If so, what does the partner suggest for supporting access and meaningful engagement?
- What is the youth community culture? Does the group generally have a positive rapport together?
- What is their prior exposure to local government? It may be necessary to start with the basics to get them up to speed and invested.

Challenges and barriers to participation

San Diego youth are diverse and evolving in their identities and require various considerations to support access.

- School and activity schedules, lack of transportation and the necessity of parental permission may limit access to youth input.
- Youth can be missed by typical engagement efforts either because they are not made aware of opportunities or their input is perceived as less relevant or important.
- Youth across the nation are experiencing a mental health crisis of anxiety and depression, which includes individual, family, community, environmental and societal factors. (US Surgeon General's 2021 Advisory). This could show up as a limited attention span, lack of trust, disruptive behavior or as general apathy.

Outreach

Outreach material

- Youth tend to be sophisticated media consumers and alert to trends in design and visual communication. Before putting outreach material together, research current youth marketing trends.
- Visual design that is playful and interesting helps to keep youth engaged. Prioritize information design that is clear and not overly technical.
- Storytelling can be powerful, especially for younger people. Sharing concepts and policies through narrative can be highly motivating for youth.
- Consider involving youth in an advisory capacity to help plan strategy, messaging and materials.

Outreach Channels

- Online outreach via social media can be an effective tool to reach youth. The City is active on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, Threads, X and YouTube social media platforms. However, platform trends change, and considerations may need to be made around current youth preferences.
- Expand the outreach through printed promotional material (posters, stickers, etc.) designed for youth. Work with youth participants as well as schools, community-based organizations, libraries, religious organizations and others to distribute., libraries, religious organizations and others to distribute.

Engagement

- Offer a dynamic introduction. Be genuine and relatable. Consider an ice breaker or give them the chance to ask off-topic questions.
- Show interest in who they are. As some youth are still developing their self-esteem and ability to connect with others, invite them to share about themselves, their opinions, and their feelings throughout the engagement. Celebrate and offer gratitude for all forms of engagement, not just for demonstrations of topical knowledge.
- Be clear about the purpose and timeline. Some youth may have a lower attention span and express frustration when the parameters are unclear. Stay transparent with them about "what", "why" and "how long".
- Create youth-centered presentations. Help them invest authentically by centering their voices and experiences.
    - Choose youth to read content or demonstrate ideas.
    - Introduce ideas with questions or through activities instead of lecturing.
    - Check for understanding with nonverbal prompts such as, "thumbs up, medium, down".
    - Offer time for breaks, reflections or questions.
    - Regularly look for ways to apply the material to their lives.
- Invite various styles of communication. Offer opportunities for pair or small group conversations, utilize handouts, slideshows, full group dialogue and individual reflections.
- Play music to create a positive space. Consider playing ambient background music as youth are arriving and doing independent work to create a welcoming environment and help them focus.
- Offer incentives to motivate them to participate. Youth may be encouraged by a variety of things — words of affirmation/compliments, gratitude, snacks, stickers or other small items.
- Create a separate area for younger children. Children under 10 may show varying levels of interest in participating in the main activities. Have options available for them to occupy themselves. This could be an adapted activity that engages the topic, such as an age-appropriate handout, interactive map or other. It could also be a table with a variety of alternative activities such as puzzles, board games, drawing materials, children's books, etc.
- Remember the audience. If the event is marketed for children and youth to join, then reference the above tips to be mindful of engaging them alongside adults. Adults may also come out of their shells when given the opportunity to engage alongside children.

Other engagement contexts

If classroom or workshop-based engagement is not available, consider these alternatives to engage youth in their own contexts:

- One-on-one interviews in public spaces or in their chosen environments
  - For example, staff working on a park improvement project may interview youth at a park about how they use the park and what features they feel could use updating.
- Arts-based engagement
  - For example, staff working on a climate resiliency project can ask youth to be creative and brainstorm ideas for nature-based solutions by drawing on paper.
  - Artistic competitions or events like photo, film or writing contests are another option.
- Field trips and tours can help youth visualize a project site and provide input on-site.
- Interactive activities using stickers or sticky notes such as community mapping or visual preference surveys.
- Consider partnering with youth-focused summer activities, such as soccer camp, to engage.
- Web-based meetings may be useful for engaging with youth who were not able to attend in person.
- Youth working groups or advisory committees for longer-running public engagement.
- Youth community liaisons who engage with youth community members to improve outreach and equitable access to City decision-making processes.

Additional considerations

- Working with youth provides the opportunity to focus on the future and lay the foundation for future engagement. Extra effort made to report findings and outcomes in audience-appropriate ways can be highly motivating for this population and helps to create engaged community members for the future.
- Consider incorporating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue for youth to share their perspectives while also engaging with older adults' knowledge. This approach can enrich the discussion and build community connections.
  - For intergenerational dialogues, consider that different age groups may prefer varied communication strategies and engagement techniques. Older adults may prefer verbal and tactile engagement strategies, while children and youth may prefer digital or visual approaches.
- Plan to gather written parent/guardian consent, especially when working with youth outside of an existing school or program. Media release consent will also be required, where applicable.

Engaging Groups Affected by Structural Exclusion

This section focuses on engagement with communities that have experienced structural exclusion from participation in decision-making processes. Structural exclusion refers to systemic barriers in programs, practices and policies that create disparities preventing individuals or communities from participating fully in decision-making processes and in accessing opportunities and resources. Communities discussed in this section have experienced structural exclusion based on race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, housing status or income.

Forms of structural exclusion can be interconnected and are often compounding. While each group has unique experiences, cultures and priorities, and has encountered this exclusion in different ways, their experiences can be further shaped by other aspects of identity, such as disability status, language, gender identity or age. Be prepared to adapt plans and practices based on community priorities, styles of communication and other community characteristics. There is no one-size-fits-all method, and transparency and respect are key to building relationships.

During conversations with community members, they may mention instances of exclusion from the recent or distant past. These moments provide opportunities to listen, acknowledge their experiences and gather feedback on how to improve future interactions. Additionally, when reporting back to groups affected by structural exclusion, it is essential to clearly communicate how their feedback was used throughout the process.

Structural exclusion by race/ethnicity

Demographics

- It is estimated that communities that have experienced structural exclusion based on race and ethnicity can represent approximately 339,400 people, or 25% of the city's total population. There are approximately 79,000 people who are Black or African American, 10,000 people who are American Indian or Alaska Native, 244,000 people who are Asian and 6,400 people who are Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. In addition, 553,000 people, or 40% of the city's total population identify as ethnically Hispanic or Latino (2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau).

Know beforehand

- Be mindful of language used to designate groups and defer to the people in the room to express preferences when referring to their own cultural group. People may have different desires around terms and names. Some examples include:
  - Black or African American
  - Latino/a, Hispanic, Latinx, Latine or other
  - Native American, Indigenous or other
- Where there are opportunities, listen and seek to understand these nuances. Be mindful not to ask about a person's identities out of context, ask people what they prefer for themselves, and consider using more than one term where people express variances.
- Normalize various ways of being and expressing identity that may differ from dominant cultural patterns and practices. Here are some examples:
  - While the U.S. dominant culture tends to value individualism, many communities of color are more collective in their approach to holding gatherings. Be prepared to utilize techniques that value and support shared voice and collective contributions, such as community mapping or vision walls.
  - Communication styles vary across cultures. Some communities value direct communication and robust discussion, which should be welcomed rather than misunderstood as conflict. Be prepared to value all the different ways people may communicate or engage in challenging conversations.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Community members may remember historical discrimination and feel the impacts of systemic racism and biases. Consequently, they may carry pain and mistrust into their interactions with local government and other institutions.

Outreach

- Actively listen to community members that have experienced structural exclusion due to their race or ethnicity and engage with cultural leaders to understand their unique challenges.
- Develop relationships with community leaders and local community-based organizations in advance of initiating a project in the community.
- Identify primary languages of the communities affected by the project and use those languages in communications. Provide language access services in communications.

Engagement

- Value different types of knowledge during engagement processes. Community wisdom, lived experience, cultural knowledge and intergenerational insights should be recognized as equally valid as technical, academic or institutional knowledge.
- Emphasize hospitality and a warm welcome. Communities that have been structurally excluded will benefit from authentically welcoming spaces. There are many ways to create welcome – music, food, ice breaker activities that build community, kind encounters with facilitators, clarity around the engagement purpose and plans, etc.
- Choose a location that is familiar and accessible. Look for a location that is well-known and commonly frequented by the community. Consider pairing engagement events with existing festivals or other events already planned by the community.

Structural exclusion by sex/gender identity

(See also *Engaging Members of the LGBTQIA+ Community*)

Demographics

- Many women and gender identities outside of cisgender male have experienced structural exclusion because of their sex and/or gender identity. 682,000 people, or 49% of the city's total population identify as female. Though the U.S. Census does not collect information about gender identity, the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles estimates that approximately 1.5 million, or 5% of adults in California identify as LGBT, and nationally, approximately 11% of LGBTQ adults identify as gender non-binary.

Know beforehand

- Defer to the people in the room to express preferences when referring to their sex and gender. People may have different desires around terms.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Women often balance multiple roles such as employment, household management, and caregiving, which can limit their availability to participate in public engagement activities. In addition, economic disparities and lower income levels among women and gender minorities can create barriers to accessing engagement activities.
- Gender-based discrimination and harassment in public spaces can deter women, non-binary people and other gender minorities from participating in engagement activities.

- Discrimination experienced by gender minorities can contribute to health disparities (Homan, 2019) and lower income levels (Kochhar, 2023), which can create a barrier to public participation.

Outreach

- Collaborate with organizations that focus on women's rights, non-binary, and other gender minorities to reach a wider community.

Engagement

- Consider using spaces with gender-inclusive facilities and private spaces for nursing or childcare.
- Provide childcare services. Caregiving responsibilities can create barriers to participation, and childcare support will help ensure broader participation at engagement events. Consider meaningful options for engaging their children.
- When asking for demographic information, make sure that questions are optional and include an option for respondents to specify their gender identity.

Structural exclusion by income

(See also *Engaging People Experiencing Homelessness and those in Emergency Shelter*)

Demographics

- The American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau provides income ranges based on the Mean Household Income of Quintiles[10]. As of 2022, low capital households are those with an income of $98,969 or less. Approximately 261,000, or 51% of households in San Diego have an income of less than $99,999. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Households with an annual income of less than $45,000 are forecasted to grow the fastest, with those earning less than $15,000 expected to increase by approximately 11,500, or 39.6% between 2022 and 2050.

Know beforehand

- Many low-income communities have experienced historic disinvestment in the form of redlining, which designated communities largely consisting of immigrant and people of color as undesirable (Beal, 2024). Recognizing and acknowledging this history and how it has affected communities is important for building trust.

[10] Household income levels are divided into five sections, with the lowest earning fifth of the population falling in the "Lowest Quintile," and the highest earning fifth of the population falling in the "Highest Quintile" with the populations in between divided among the "Second, Third and Fourth Quintiles."

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Time, transportation, childcare and work schedules can be more difficult to coordinate with fewer resources, making public participation less of a priority to people who have been structurally excluded by income.
- Low-income communities often have less access to reliable internet and other modes of engagement through technology.
- While people with lower incomes often demonstrate resilience and innovative solutions to challenges, health disparities disproportionately affect these communities. This may limit access to some community members and may significantly impact awareness and ability to participate.

Outreach

- Use clear and simple language so the public can understand how their input will be used. Follow up to show how feedback has shaped outcomes—this reinforces trust and accountability.
- Utilize multiple communication channels, such as social media, local radio stations, community centers and schools to reach a broad audience.

Engagement

- Consider additional opportunities for participation support, which can be particularly important. Consider asking community members about the kinds of participation support that are most beneficial.
- Community members might differ in their personal capacity to engage with a project, so providing options at different capacities can help them to participate in a way that best suits their needs.
- Similarly, providing engagement opportunities outside of traditional work hours can enhance participation from people who may not be able to take time off to attend engagement events.
- Work with community-based organizations that advocate for or serve low-income communities or provide basic needs, such as medical care, groceries and childcare, as they may have their own unique strategies to engage communities, and may have knowledge of community sentiment.
- Choose a location that is familiar and accessible. Look for a location that is well-known and commonly frequented by the community. Consider pairing engagement events with existing festivals or other events already planned by the community.

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Engaging Immigrants

Know beforehand

Immigrants, refugees, asylees and undocumented community members

While this section uses “immigrant communities” as a broad term, it is important to recognize the distinct legal statuses, experiences and needs of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented community members. When possible, use the specific term most appropriate to the community being engaged.

The foreign-born population in the city of San Diego is approximately 343,000 or 25% of the city’s total population (2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau). According to the U.S. Immigration Policy Center at UCSD, the average number of years this group has spent in the U.S. is nearly 23 years. The immigrant population comes from at least 115 countries and territories, most commonly from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, China and India. The fastest-growing immigrant populations in the city come from Syria, Kenya, Sudan, Iraq and Nigeria.

The main languages spoken by immigrant communities in the city are Spanish, English, Tagalog, Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese. Approximately half of the immigrant population in the city has limited English proficiency. Thirty-one percent of immigrants in the city who are 25 years or older have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The immigrant population of the city adds approximately 213,000 workers to the city’s labor force and contributes over $946 million in state and local taxes per year. Refugee arrivals in the City of San Diego reached a 20-year high of 2,672 in 2016. In 2022, 398 refugees were resettled in the city. The undocumented population in the city is approximately 67,900 people.

Immigrant community members often demonstrate significant leadership and agency through established community organizations, cultural institutions, small businesses, faith communities and informal support networks. Many bring valuable professional expertise, entrepreneurial skills and innovative problem-solving approaches developed through navigating multiple cultural contexts. Engagement processes should recognize and leverage this leadership capacity by creating opportunities for immigrant community members to shape priorities, lead discussions and co-design solutions.

Identify and reach out to key partners, community leaders, religious institutions and organizations that work with immigrant populations. Learning from those who are trusted by the community can provide critical and up-to-date insight to inform outreach and engagement strategies.

Understand that there may be community members in the room who are undocumented or “Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals” (DACA). While participants are unlikely to share this, make an effort to support people in feeling welcome and included regardless of their citizenship status. Be conscious about language that assumes everyone in the room is an American citizen or defines “American'' as being a documented citizen. In addition, the Mayor signed Executive Order 2025-1 affirming support for the city's immigrant community and prohibiting the San Diego Police Department from facilitating immigration enforcement activities.

Be mindful that English may be someone’s second language. When English is not someone’s first language, they may value additional communication aids to support engagement.

Understand that there can be cultural patterns associated with different groups. Some examples of differences in cultural patterns may include:

- Preferences around collaborative, consensus-building approaches or expressing individual viewpoints directly. Providing opportunities for both group discussion and individual input can allow participants to choose their preferred style of participation.
- Different comfort levels with direct disagreement or challenging conversations. Create space for various ways to express differing viewpoints, including written feedback options.

Many factors beyond country of origin influence communication styles, including personal preferences, education, socioeconomic background and length of time in the U.S. Approach each engagement with a willingness to learn from community members about their specific experiences.

Potential barriers to participation

- Participants may speak multiple languages but may need additional language support if their primary language spoken is not English, have limited English proficiency or do not speak English.
- Some may have less availability due to working longer hours at low wage jobs. See also the “Structural exclusion by income” section of *Engaging Groups Affected by Structural Exclusion*.
- Many immigrants have global exposure and expansive multicultural experiences. However, as they tend to have spent less time in the U.S., they may not be familiar with local government processes.
- Depending on past experiences, they may have limited trust in government.

- Immigrants who are asylum seekers, refugees or undocumented may have a history of trauma that results in high confidentiality and security for fear of deportation or legal complications.
- Mixed-status families (households with both documented and undocumented members) may avoid government contact due to concerns that participation could put family members at risk. This concern can lead to entire families refraining from providing personal information or input.
- Some may face barriers related to technology access or culturally appropriate digital interfaces.

Outreach

- Look to the immigrant community for ideas on how to create effective outreach material. Consider including visual styles and imagery that will be familiar to the community.
- Provide versions of outreach materials in additional languages as needed.

Engagement

- Use multiple modes of communication, especially when engaging people whose first language is not English.
    - Offer one-to-one support where possible.
    - Use slides with visual aids and images to support comprehension.
    - Intentionally speak simply and clearly.
    - Be mindful of using idioms and other colloquial language that may not be clear to people who were not raised in American culture.
    - Pause more frequently for questions or reflections.
    - When defining technical terms, offer definitions in writing and reframe the definitions through further explanation and narratives.
- Prioritize safety and confidentiality for mixed-status families and undocumented community members.
    - Provide options for community members to provide input anonymously, such as comment forms.
    - Partner with trusted community-based organizations who typically have deep connections to the communities they serve and experience with culturally competent engagement.

- Emphasize hospitality and a warm welcome. Communities that have experienced systemic injury, past trauma or a break-down of trust will benefit from authentically welcoming spaces. There are many ways to create welcome— music, food, ice breaker activities that build community, kind encounters with the facilitator, clarity around the purpose and plans, etc.
- Hold conversations in an open format such as a circle when possible. For many communities, a circle symbolizes welcome and inclusion and can help participants feel more comfortable. Arrange a circle so that all the participants can easily see each other. Keep in mind that the circle does not ensure practices of mutuality and shared voice. Integrate a guide to productive meetings or meeting agreements and other equitable conversation practices.
- Invite storytelling. Stories go a long way in creating connection, celebrating the diversity of the room and opening other avenues for engagement. Prompt moments of storytelling either to build community or to investigate the project topic.

Engaging Members of the LGBTQIA+ Community

Know beforehand

LGBTQIA+ is a common abbreviation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and plus community. The plus is included to signify other gender and sexual identities and to recognize that these terms and identities are not monolithic. Other variations of this acronym exist, including LGBTQ+ and GLBT+, and may be regionally specific.

There are approximately 230,000 people in the city of San Diego who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer, which is approximately 10% of the total population. About 40% of the LGBQ population in San Diego County is Hispanic, compared to 31% of the non-LGBQ population. About one in three adults who identify as LGBQ are facing economic hardship. More than one in three adult LGBQ people have seriously thought about committing suicide. LGBQ adults are more likely to face barriers to care (*County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, 2022*). The County has a gap in data forpeople who are transgender but has stated that as more data becomes available on the health and well-being of the transgender population in San Diego, they will be included in future analyses.

Language and specific terminology are complex and perspectives can vary and shift over time.

- Research and seek out resources from local relevant organizations to learn and apply current preferred language. For example, understand the difference between gender expression, gender identity and sexual orientation. Collaborate with LGBTQIA+ community leaders for guidance.
- The LGBTQIA+ community is diverse and people within the community have varying points of view and preferences. Where possible, ask for people's names and pronouns for respectful conversations. For notes on pronouns, see below.
- The word *queer* has a mixed reception within the LGBTQIA+ community. Some members of the community might prefer and even celebrate the term, while others (often older members) might perceive it as unacceptable and even offensive. Consequently, it should be used with care and not be applied as a broad umbrella term for all LGBTQIA+ people.

Respect the privacy of participants by maintaining confidentiality when collecting input on sexual orientation and gender identity, especially in communities where being LGBTQIA+ may still carry social stigma or legal repercussions.

Be quick to apologize for mistakes. Mistakes may include misgendering (referring to someone using a word that does not reflect their gender identity) or deadnaming (referring to someone by their birth name when they have changed their name as part of their gender transition).

Apologize if you misgender, deadname or otherwise offend someone, acknowledging the impact of your actions on them, even if unintentional. Humility, adaptability and compassion will provide a strong foundation for understanding and cultivating trust.

LGBTQIA+ youth tend to be politically active and engaged in civic action. In a recent study by suicide prevention non-profit The Trevor Project, more than half of LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults had participated in protest/walkout, letter writing or volunteer community service in the past year. Become aware of the present issues at hand and prepared to affirm and support the energy of young leaders.

Be mindful that LGBTQIA+ experiences vary widely between urban and rural/suburban communities, age groups and cultural backgrounds. Engagement strategies should account for this diversity of experience.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- **Lack of trust:** LGBTQIA+ people have likely experienced discrimination or marginalization at some point. Community members may lack trust in government institutions or public gatherings where non-affirming people may be present. Additionally, when there are contentious topics being discussed, there tends to be an increase in displays of prejudice or gender and/or sexuality-related phobias.
- **Visibility concerns:** Some members of the LGBTQIA+ community may not feel comfortable disclosing their identities in public settings, which may impact their willingness to participate in engagement events.
- **Safety concerns:** Some LGBTQIA+ community members may worry about harassment or discrimination when attending public engagement events, especially on controversial topics.
- **Intersectional challenges:** LGBTQIA+ people from marginalized communities, such as people of color or those with disabilities, may face compounded barriers to engagement due to layers of marginalization in their experience. Socioeconomic factors, language barriers, and lack of access to transportation or childcare services can further limit participation.

Outreach

- Include diverse images in outreach materials to support LGBTQIA+ identification and inclusion.
- Use language for all people
  - For example, rather than referencing men/male and women/female, reference “all people” or “all genders”.

- When the topic uniquely impacts the LGBTQIA+ community, consider creating closed sessions for community members to safely process and give input.
- Connect with LGBTQIA+ community centers and organizations to disseminate information.
- Partner with LGBTQIA+ influencers, activists and community leaders to amplify outreach efforts and reach a wider audience.

Engagement

- Invite optional introductions of pronouns. A person's gender expression does not necessarily equate to their gender identity. Provide options for community members to share their pronouns.
  - At the sign-in table, include instructions for filling out name tags that optionally include pronouns.
  - If the event lends itself to a moment of verbal introductions, facilitators can invite people to introduce themselves and include their pronouns if they desire.
- Host engagement events in LGBTQIA+ affirming venues or virtual spaces to create a welcoming environment for all participants. Create mechanisms for private feedback for people who may not feel comfortable speaking publicly.
- Create events designed to celebrate and center LGBTQIA+ community members. Examples could include a Pride parade, LGBTQIA+ art showcase, drag performance or LGBTQIA+-friendly roundtable discussions.

Engaging with Older Adults

Know beforehand

Older adults are people who are age 65 or over. This age threshold largely stems from eligibility for programs such as Social Security and Medicare and is commonly used in survey research.

The older adult population in the city of San Diego is approximately 196,000, or 14% of the city's total population (*2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*, U.S. Census Bureau). The population of those age 65 or older is expected to grow by about 78,900, or 45.7%, from 2022 to 2050.

Older adults represent a diverse group with valuable skills, expertise and community knowledge. Many bring decades of professional experience, organizational skills, volunteerism backgrounds and knowledge that can enhance community engagement processes.

Be aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity among older adults to tailor outreach materials appropriately. Older members of an immigrant or refugee population are more likely than younger members of their community to require translation and interpretation services.

Older adults often carry a personal memory of local history, which can be influenced by factors like their race, gender and income.

- These experiences may be of significant value in present-day decision-making. Create strategies for capturing those memories, stories and insights and incorporating them into project feedback.
- Learn about the past and how it might have impacted older members of the community with a longer history in the area. Depending on their experiences, they may have been disappointed by past decisions and may have varying levels of trust in government. Listen and authentically validate past experiences.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Physical barriers such as lack of ramps or handrails can prevent older community members from attending events.
- Many older adults have limited mobility and transportation options, making it difficult for them to travel to engagement event locations.
- Chronic health conditions, hearing or vision disabilities and general health concerns can hinder participation.

- Digital comfort and access vary widely among older adults. While some face technological barriers, others are highly proficient with digital tools. Offer both digital and non-digital options, and avoid making assumptions about people's capabilities or preferences.
- Older adults may experience social isolation, which can result in a lack of awareness or interest in community engagement opportunities.
- Past experiences or general mistrust of government projects can make older adults wary of participating.

Outreach

- Use large print, simple language and clear visuals in all printed materials.
- Choose communication methods that may be more familiar to older adults. These may include traditional media like print newspapers or newsletters, radio or TV, in-person meetings or phone calls to provide information and gather feedback.
- Identify community centers, senior centers and local organizations that already engage with older adults. These groups and venues may be willing to promote upcoming engagement opportunities and distribute materials. They may also provide good potential locations to hold events.
- Send informational flyers directly to homes, ensuring they are easy to read and understand.
- Organize visits to senior living facilities to distribute information and answer questions.

Engagement

- Choose venues that are easily accessible by public transit, have ample parking and are fully accessible for people with mobility disabilities. Consider going where older adults already are—such as senior living communities or senior centers—to eliminate the challenges of travel.
    - Consider incorporating hearing, vision and cognitive accommodations, such as the provision of assistive listening devices.
- Include mornings and afternoon opportunities for public engagement to accommodate varying schedules and energy levels.
- Simple communication and engagement strategies that use hard-copy materials are well-suited for this population. For any engagement technique, prepare physical options alongside the digital option. Offer the physical option right away instead of waiting for someone to request it.

- When technology is requested or required, use clear and adequate instructions. Make instructions available verbally and in writing. Be prepared to offer one-on-one assistance and clarification. Give back-up options if the instructions are still unclear.
- Where seating is limited, consider how to prioritize seating for older populations.
- Use simple interactive formats such as small group discussions or workshops. Also, consider setting aside time for storytelling and/or sharing memories that relate to the subject matter. This will support older adults in feeling affirmed while using their lived experiences to inform the decision-making process.
- Consider incorporating opportunities for intergenerational dialogue that allow older adults to share their knowledge while also engaging with youth perspectives. This approach can enrich the discussion and build community connections.
    - For intergenerational dialogues, consider that different age groups may prefer varied communication strategies and engagement techniques. Older adults may prefer verbal and tactile engagement strategies, while children and youth may prefer digital or visual approaches.

Engaging with People Experiencing Homelessness and Those in Emergency Shelter

Know beforehand

According to the Regional Task Force on Homelessness 2025 Point-in-Time Count, there are 5,866 people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in the city of San Diego. Unhoused people come from many different backgrounds. Be aware of the cultures, traditions, perspectives and specific needs of diverse groups within this population, including older adults, veterans, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQIA+ individuals, youth and people of color.

U.S. Office of the Federal Register Categories of the Homeless Definition

In 2011, the U.S. Office of the Federal Register standardized the regulation for defining "homeless" across various federal programs. The City of San Diego adheres to these definitions as detailed below. The full definitions of each category are linked.

- **Category 1: Literally Homeless**
  - Individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, or is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements.
- **Category 2: Imminent Risk of Homelessness**
  - Individual or family facing the loss of their primary nighttime residence within 14 days, with no alternative housing and lacking resources or support.
- **Category 3: Homeless Under Other Federal Statutes**
  - Unaccompanied youth under 25, or families with youth under 25 who are defined as homeless by other federal statutes, must not have had a lease or permanent housing in the last 60 days, have moved at least twice in those 60 days, and are expected to remain unstable due to special needs or barriers.
- **Category 4: Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence**
  - Any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee domestic violence, has no other residence, and lacks the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing.

Determine if there is a presence of people experiencing homelessness in the project area. Be aware that the best sources of information may not always be official sources, but rather community members, community-based organizations, community health workers or from people with firsthand experience. This information can help inform strategies for outreach and engagement.

In addition, awareness of the overrepresentation of some races, ethnicities, and identities in the unhoused population may provide additional insight that can be applied when seeking and evaluating public input.

Be aware of prior biases, judgments or stereotyping that may affect decision-making, even in the outreach and engagement stages. Approach each conversation with compassion and understand there may be more to a person's story than is immediately apparent. Consider completing sensitivity trainings on topics such as trauma-informed care, cultural competency, and mental health first aid, prior to any project discussions with community members experiencing homelessness.

Be familiar with local, state and federal laws and policies that affect unhoused individuals, such as anti-camping ordinances. This will provide insight into the daily experiences of this community and will help clarify issues and concerns that may come up during conversations.

Identify existing shelters, food banks, schools, faith-based organizations, health clinics, mental health services, addiction treatment programs and other resources that support unhoused individuals. Knowing what services are available can add value to engagement efforts by assisting individuals to find the help they need.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Unhoused individuals may not reside in the same location on any given night. This mobility may make it challenging to maintain consistent communication and follow-up.
- Unhoused individuals may be wary of engaging with new projects due to previous negative interactions with government agencies. Building trust takes time and consistent, positive interactions.
- Unhoused individuals may not have reliable access to a mailing address, the internet or transportation. This limits their ability to receive information about public engagement opportunities. Additionally, a lack of forms of identification may prevent some from access to other services.
- This population may see higher rates of mental health issues and substance use disorders compared to the overall population. These issues may affect individuals' ability to engage in structured activities, understand information or feel comfortable participating. In addition, there may be a need to proactively plan for individuals who may be experiencing mental health challenges or substance use, which can affect their behavior.
- Fear of being judged, stigmatized or reported to authorities can deter people from engaging. They may also worry about the safety and confidentiality of the information they share.
- Daily survival activities, such as finding food, shelter, and safety, often take precedence over providing input.

Outreach

- Place informational materials in high-visibility areas like transit stops, churches, clinics, shelters and food distribution points. Make materials eye-catching and provide clear, concise information. Provide versions of outreach materials in additional languages as needed.
- Use images and audio messages to convey important information. This is especially helpful for those with literacy challenges or who speak different languages.
- Use social media to reach unhoused individuals who may have access to the internet through public computers or smartphones. For example, look for social media groups that provide information and community for the local unhoused population.
- Collaborate with organizations that already have established relationships with the unhoused community. These organizations can help disseminate information about outreach efforts and encourage participation.

Engagement

- To support authentic input and engagement, consider planning closed events specifically for unhoused community members. Ideally, these are done in partnership with existing service providers such as local shelters.
- Choose locations that are easily accessible and familiar, such as libraries, shelters, community centers or parks. Schedule events at times that do not conflict with mealtimes or other critical activities.
- Offer practical incentives to encourage participation. This could include providing meals, hygiene kits or transportation vouchers.
- Provide basic on-site amenities such as wi-fi and outlets for charging communication devices.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere by ensuring that staff are trained to be respectful, hospitable and empathetic. Provide comfortable seating, refreshments and a relaxed environment to make participants feel at ease. Provide space for participants to securely store their belongings during the engagement event.
- If possible, include project staff who have direct experience of homelessness.
- Be prepared for varying levels of participation. Some individuals may need more time to feel comfortable sharing their opinions.

- Clearly communicate that participants' input will be kept confidential and used constructively. Avoid collecting unnecessary personal information and assure participants that their safety and privacy are a priority.
- Use various interactive methods to gather input, such as focus groups, vision walls and participatory activities like arts-based engagement or visioning workshops to allow participants to engage in ways that are comfortable for them.

Engaging People with Disabilities

Know beforehand

About 134,000, or 10% of people in the city of San Diego who do not reside in an institutional facility have a disability (*2023 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates*, U.S. Census Bureau). Become familiar with the various types of disabilities — difficulties with hearing, vision, cognition, moving around and the ability to clean and dress oneself and living independently — and the specific needs associated with each.

Learn appropriate ways to communicate about disability.

- Understand that most disabilities are not immediately visible. Some disabilities, like chronic pain, mental health disorders or cognitive disabilities, are not always readily apparent, and the people with the disability may not choose to disclose them.
- Use clear, simple, and inclusive language**.** Use language that respects people with disabilities as individuals with agency by emphasizing the person first, rather than their disability. Choose language that emphasizes what a person can do instead of what they cannot. For example, say "They walk with a cane" or "use crutches".
- Avoid euphemisms. Do not use terms such as "differently-abled," "physically challenged," "handi-capable," or "special needs". Avoid phrases like "suffers from," "afflicted by," "victim of," and "confined to". Instead, use neutral language like "they have/are living with a disability".

Existing services, organizations and advocacy groups that support people with disabilities have special insight into the needs and interests of the disabled community. Reach out to knowledgeable partners when planning outreach and engagement activities.

The City offers programs and services for people with disabilities. Note that the City's Administrative Regulation (AR) No. 96.20 requires the City to provide documents, programs and services that are accessible to people with disabilities. The City's ADA Compliance and Accessibility Division can serve as a resource for questions regarding accommodations for people with disabilities.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates document accessibility and other accessibility accommodations, including selecting accessible meeting locations and providing ways for participants to request accommodations.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Most City-owned facilities with public meeting space are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Some spaces and venues may not contain adaptive equipment that allows those with hearing or visual disabilities to fully participate.
- People with hearing, vision or cognitive disabilities may encounter difficulties in accessing information or participating in both online and in-person events.

- People with disabilities have likely experienced discrimination, trauma, stress and/or isolation due to their disability.
- Lack of accessible transportation options can make it difficult for some people with disabilities to attend events or meetings.
- General public may lack awareness or understanding of the specific needs and rights of people with disabilities.

Outreach

Outreach material

- All materials (flyers, fact sheets, webpages) should be made available as needed in accessible formats, such as large print or Braille.
- To bridge any communication challenges, ask what the person may need so they can better access the information.
- Use images and examples that reflect the diversity of the disability community.
- Engage in advance with community leaders and advocates who can provide insights and help bridge communication with the disabled community.

Outreach channels

- Collaborate with local disability organizations to disseminate information through their networks.
- Digital content and webpages should be compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies.

Engagement

Choose venues that are fully accessible and inclusive, including parking, entrances, restrooms and meeting rooms. Additional things to consider for accessibility include:

- Hearing: Try to eliminate excess noise or echo with sound baffling, like curtains or carpets. Make amplification available for quiet presenters and audience participants. If background music is played, use a soft volume and turn it off once discussion begins.
- Vision: Test documents at the scale that they will be presented to check if the text can be read throughout the room.
- Cognitive: Designate staff who can spend extra time with people who may desire additional explanation of concepts or materials. Provide a variety of seating options for people who may prefer to sit at a distance from others or in a quieter location.

Provide information in materials and webpages about accessible transportation options to the venue.

Bring a sound system with a microphone and use it both for presenters and, if possible, for members of the audience when asking questions or making comments. If there is no microphone available for audience members, make sure that the presenter repeats questions in the microphone so that everyone can hear.

Provide sign language interpreters and/or provide real-time captioning during web-based meetings as needed. Under the ADA, cities are required to provide a sign language interpreter free of charge for people who request this accommodation.

Provide assistive listening devices for those with hearing disabilities.

Offer multiple ways to participate to allow access for everyone. Provide accessible methods for participants to give feedback, such as written or online comment forms, one-on-one discussions, virtual meetings and surveys.

Incorporate accessibility considerations and techniques for web-based meetings:

- Mute participants upon entry to avoid unnecessary background sounds.
- Describe visual content as it is being presented, including slides, videos and whiteboards.
- Provide instructions on how participants can ask questions.
- Repeat questions that are submitted via chat functions.
- Send any resource links sent in chat by email as well.
- Enable the Closed Captions feature, if available.
- Provide a recording of the session.

When working with people with cognitive disabilities, use multiple modes of communication.

- Use slides with visual aids and additional images to support comprehension.
- Intentionally speak simply and clearly. Be mindful of using idioms and other metaphorical language.
- Pause more frequently for questions or reflections.
- When defining technical language, offer the definition in writing and reframe the definition through further explanation and narratives. Allow for questions.
- Use creative or embodied modalities such as project models, post-it note stations, collaborative activities or story-based scenarios.
- Offer opportunities for pair or small group conversations.

Engaging Religious Communities

Know beforehand

According to the Pew Research Center's 2025 Religious Landscape Study, approximately 59% of people in the San Diego metro region adhere to a religion. Common religions in the region include Buddhism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Latter-day Saints, Protestant and non-denominational Christian. Smaller spiritual communities include secular humanist groups, and people who practice Indigenous spiritual traditions.

It is important to know that federal and state constitutional laws prohibit government endorsement of or discrimination against religion. Consider consulting with the City Attorney's Office when contemplating partnership with religious communities to make sure partnerships are compliant.

Look for ways for engagement efforts with religious communities to be mutually beneficial. Religious groups are often inclined toward working to benefit their neighborhoods and city. Frame conversations around engagement through service like assistance for low-income and unhoused people and other service projects.

Get to know the subcultures in various communities. There may be different histories and sects in their religious backgrounds. Take time to understand relevant traditions, customs, holy texts and etiquette like greetings and titles. Using correct titles and accurately referencing texts and traditions communicates respect and builds trust.

Be aware of important religious days and festivals, and their significance for different faiths. This will provide insight and reference points for engagement and can guide scheduling.

Religious communities often hold unrecognized resources that support goals of outreach, public engagement and partnership. Members of religious communities are often highly motivated to participate in public engagement opportunities. Clergy are often skilled in leadership, know the community well and are attuned to various community perspectives. In addition, religious groups often represent the diversity of their neighborhoods and encompass a wide range of capacities and resources. Meaningful cultivation of these relationships can yield benefits for everyone involved.

Learn about denominational structures as well as decision-making protocols to identify key contacts. Leadership and decision-making methods vary across religious communities. Awareness of these differences will make it easier and more efficient to plan events and gather input.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Leadership, organizational structures and informal networks can be ambiguous and/or change often in this community, especially among smaller entities.
- Some religious groups or people may have significant mistrust of government if the local government is perceived to be unaligned with the views or values of prominent religious groups or leaders, or due to histories of surveillance. Successful engagement may require an initial investment in trust-building.

Outreach

- Many congregations and religious groups maintain communication channels like bulletins, newsletters, emails, webpages, and pulpit announcements. Explore the possibility of sharing invitations and collateral material via these channels. Be clear that the public engagement is for a secular City project. Ensure materials and messaging remain focused on project specifics and their secular purpose.
- Develop ongoing relationships with clergy through events like an annual clergy breakfast or interfaith collaborative hosted by senior officials.
- Partner with interfaith groups who can collectively disseminate information to many congregations.
- Identify and involve respected clergy in reviewing public announcements/messaging related to their communities.

Engagement

- In some religious group settings, some people may observe religious practices regarding gender interactions such as greetings and specifically when to shake hands and when not to, eye contact, perceptions of modesty and style of dress. Research in advance, ask questions, and follow the example of those in the room for guidance.
- Consider using congregations' facilities or houses of worship for engagement events, if appropriate. This can improve accessibility and familiarity, and increase response rates. Clearly state in written and oral communications that the event is public and not affiliated with any religious group. Explicitly state in invitations that participation is open to everyone.
- Members of congregations are often open and interested in volunteer opportunities because of their interest in their community. Consider if there are ways for volunteers to help host events and/or gather input.
- If the engagement event is focused for a particular religious group, invite a leader from the group to help introduce the event to participants.

Engaging Veterans & Members of the Military

Know beforehand

There are approximately 72,000 civilian veterans in the city of San Diego, or approximately 7% of the total population (*2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates,* U.S. Census Bureau). Additionally, according to the San Diego Military Advisory Council, there are 115,000 active-duty military members in the city, mostly enlisted in the Navy and the Marine Corps.

Become familiar with military culture, values, terminology and the experiences of service members and veterans. Veterans and active-duty military share a unique experience and language. Learning about their communities can support meaningful engagement and cultivate trust. Here are some elements to consider:

- **Values & principles**
  - Core values that may guide service members' actions and decisions include courage, commitment, teamwork and sacrifice. Strong bonds are often formed among service members, emphasizing loyalty, trust and mutual support.
  - The military operates on a strict hierarchy of rank and chain of command. Respect for rank and authority is deeply ingrained. Using honorific terms of address like "sir" or "ma'am" may be normalized and even directed at people in authority outside of military contexts.
  - Military people tend to value being part of something bigger than themselves.
  - Military people tend to value authenticity and directness. Engaging honestly and clearly will likely produce the best results with this community.
  - Family is a priority for many active-duty military members. Outreach and engagement efforts that consider and include the entire family will be appreciated.
- **Structure**
  - The U.S. military has six branches: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard. Each branch has its own culture and traditions.

While there may be shared values and cultural norms, it is also important to recognize that this is a diverse community. Veterans and people in the military encompass different branches, ages, ranks, reasons for joining the military and military service experiences. Some may not appreciate language that conflates branches or assumes shared experiences. Make every effort to research and learn about the nuances and distinctions.

Below are some examples:

- Some active-duty military can be as young as 17 or older than 60.
- Some military people have experienced trauma and may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from their service. Combat veterans are more likely than non-combat veterans to have had a challenging or traumatizing experience.
- The technical term for "Veterans" refers to people who have served, whereas "Retired Military" refers to people who served when there was no war and retired after at least 20 years of service. Consider the significance of these terms and varied experiences.
- Just as the non-military general population, life outcomes and experiences, including educational, socioeconomic, post-service employment and mental health, can vary widely among the veteran population.

Veterans often have an innate sense of commitment to service. They may not only be interested in participating in engagement opportunities and providing input, but also willing to volunteer time to support engagement planning and outreach. Reach out to local veterans' organizations to find interested members.

Challenges and barriers to participation

- Trust and privacy concerns: Depending on the experiences of veterans or active-duty members, there may be distrust toward governmental institutions and/or skepticism around sharing personal information due to concerns about how it will be used.
- Physical accessibility: Some veterans may have disabilities that require special accommodations.
- Mental health:
  - Veterans, especially older ones, may feel socially isolated or disconnected from their communities.
  - PTSD, anxiety and depression are prevalent among veterans and can affect their willingness and ability to engage.
  - Veterans and active-duty military members may feel misunderstood or stigmatized due to misconceptions about military service and mental health.
- Cultural differences: Military culture can differ significantly from civilian life. Differences in language and experience between civilians and military personnel can create communication barriers and misunderstandings.
- Availability: Active-duty military members may have limited availability due to daily assignments, training, relocations and deployments.

Outreach

Outreach material

- Use inclusive imagery to capture diverse representation of people in the military. Include diverse genders, ages, racial and ethnic groups and representation of different branches and ranks.
- Consider working with a veteran advisor to develop relatable and relevant materials to the military community. Make sure that all materials are accessible.
- Use correct terminology: Become familiar with basic military terms but avoid overusing jargon or acronyms.

Outreach channels

- Connect with veterans through organizations that serve the population including advocacy organizations, housing facilities for veterans, veterans service clubs, Veterans Administration (VA) medical center or clinic, state veterans' homes, senior centers, churches and other community-based organizations.
- If the intention is to reach out to active-duty military and families, contact a Family Readiness officer or ombudsman at a local base.
- The San Diego Military Advisory Council and community liaisons at local military bases may be helpful in connecting with active-duty military members and veterans.
- Participate in job fairs, health fairs, military appreciation days and other community events whose intended audience is veterans.

Engagement

- To support authentic input and engagement, consider planning closed engagements specifically for military communities. The subculture and experiences of military people (veterans or active-duty members) can be very distinct from non-military people.
- Collaborate with veterans' organizations to create engagements that provide practical resources. Consider how to organize an event that gathers input while also connecting people with resources to meet specific needs such as employment, mental health and housing.
- Clearly articulate project goals and outcomes, as military people may be accustomed to more direct communication. Providing clear information about how their input will be used can bolster trust.
- Consideration of the needs of both parents and children is an important element of engagement with members of the military. Active-duty members may be away from their families for up to a year at a time, and while they are gone, the partner or

spouse may be parenting children alone. Because of this, time spent with family or other personal time is of high value. Create a family-friendly environment by providing childcare and fun activities for older children. Meals together, community games and kid-friendly spaces will be appreciated.

- Show respectful appreciation. Express gratitude for their service or their family member's service.
- Don't ask questions about service experiences. Because experiences can carry stress, trauma, fear of judgment or other stigmas, it's best to refrain from asking questions. Allow people to share their own story voluntarily and without prompting.
- Create a comfortable and trauma-sensitive seating arrangement. In consideration that some may have undergone trauma, have seating options whereby guests can see the exits and be mindful of not overcrowding. Larger rooms or smaller groups may be more comfortable.

Working with Businesses

About businesses

Businesses range in size from small, locally-owned establishments to large corporations. They include retail shops, restaurants, service providers, manufacturers and innovation start-ups. Their role in the community can extend beyond economic activity; they contribute to local identity, provide employment and serve as hubs for community interaction.

Role of businesses in public participation

City staff can work with businesses to engage business owners, employees and customers to increase awareness of or provide input on City projects. Engaging businesses can strengthen community connections and help create projects that support economic growth and neighborhood vitality. Businesses drive job creation and can often offer practical, solution-oriented perspectives.

The interests of businesses may vary based on their size and capacity to engage. For example, large employers are typically interested in engaging on projects relevant to regional economic development, workforce development, major land use decisions and infrastructure investments. On the other hand, small businesses may be more interested in local issues like trash collection, parking meters and permit fees. Recognizing how projects may affect business revenue is important. Engagement is also important when rolling out targeted programs, such as compliance education or workforce expansion efforts.

Ways to work with businesses

Identify if a business is operating within a Maintenance Assessment District, Business Improvement District, and/or the San Diego Promise Zone to see if there are opportunities to collaborate and leverage resources. If a business is part of these designations/areas, the Economic Development Department can help facilitate engagement. There are also local business associations, councils and chambers that can help serve as a bridge to their members.

The Economic Development Department can also support with identifying stakeholders to understand which businesses may have an interest in or be affected by a project. For small business engagement, direct methods like hand-delivering flyers and hosting targeted events that can drive revenue to the business, such as community cafes, may help build relationships. Community-based organizations may also be better positioned to engage directly with local business owners or facilitate interactions. Report back to businesses about engagement outcomes to foster trust and relationships.

Working with the City's Boards and Commissions

About boards and commissions

The City's boards and commissions are appointed groups with distinct missions that advise elected officials and provide recommendations to staff on their areas of business. Their members are volunteers who voice the community's opinions and share information with their networks. They are bridges of communication between the City and the public.

Role of boards and commissions in public participation

Working with boards and commissions can make the decision-making process more transparent, provide staff valuable insight and give projects credibility.

Engage boards or commissions to share information about a project at significant milestones and gather public input.

Ways to work with boards and commissions

Understand the duties and functions of boards and commissions to determine which should be included in the stakeholder analysis. Initiate communication by contacting the designated staff liaison. Liaisons attend and support their group's meetings and relay information between the group and City staff. Bringing in relevant boards or commissions into the process early can also allow for the co-development of effective engagement strategies.

For projects that are citywide and large in scope, staff may also contact the Director of Appointments/Boards and Commissions who can streamline communications to staff liaisons. Information should be shared well in advance to the Director and liaisons.

Other considerations

- Boards, commissions and advisory bodies' members often have full-time jobs and busy schedules in addition to their volunteer member duties.
- Provide advance notice and information ahead of time to allow members to prepare for providing input on projects.
- Staff liaisons can provide additional insight or considerations for their respective board, commission or advisory body.

Working with Community Planning Groups and the Community Planners Committee (CPC)

About community planning groups and the Community Planners Committee
Community planning groups are independent organizations made up of volunteer members that are recognized by the City to make recommendations to City decision-makers on certain development projects, long-range planning policies in plans and Citywide zoning and development regulations. There are currently 41 active planning groups operating in the City. Although planning groups share the same responsibilities, each group is unique given their own community history, geography, demographics and development patterns.

Community planning groups provide advisory recommendations on land use planning matters such as amendments to the General Plan and community plans. They also review public and private projects that require a discretionary development permit and can provide a recommendation for City staff, decision-makers and the project applicant to consider. Discretionary development permits typically require a public hearing for approval.

Community planning groups are governed by Council Policy 600-24 which establishes their roles and responsibilities as recognized planning groups. Council Policy 600-24 requires each planning group to follow their own operating procedures as well as the Ralph M. Brown Act which ensures that their meetings are noticed and open to the public. Each community planning group has a chairperson who sets the agenda, facilitates the meeting and serves as the main point of contact for the planning group.

Land use matters that are citywide or regional in scope are heard by the Community Planners Committee. The Community Planners Committee is made up of either the chairperson from each recognized planning group or their designated representative as specified in Council Policy 600-09. The Community Planners Committee discusses and provides input on regional or citywide issues and initiatives. Each Community Planners Committee voting member is responsible for keeping their respective community planning group members informed about citywide and regional issues and representing the interests and positions of their respective community planning groups to provide a recommendation.

Although community planning groups and the Community Planners Committee do not have formal decision-making authority, their votes and input serve as valuable recommendations on land use-related policies and regulations.

Role of community planning groups and the Community Planners Committee in Public Participation

Collaborating with community planning groups and the Community Planners Committee can offer valuable insights into the unique context and interests of each community. Community planning group members can help share information and invite engagement from their broader community. Community planning groups can also be a bridge to other stakeholders such as homeowners' associations, community-based organizations, town councils, professional organizations, etc. who may also serve on planning groups as appointed members.

The City generally engages planning groups on community-specific initiatives to seek input such as amendment or updates to community plans or infrastructure projects. The City engages with the Community Planners Committee on citywide initiatives to seek input such as amendments or updates to the General Plan or infrastructure projects that may affect multiple areas of the city.

Ways to work with community planning groups and the Community Planners Committee

Community planning groups – Community planning groups typically meet once a month and can be a forum to discuss projects within a community plan area. Depending on the complexity of a project, community planning groups may establish a subcommittee to help formulate a recommendation for the full community planning group. Bringing community planning groups into the process early can also allow for the co-development of effective engagement strategies.

Community Planners Committee – The Community Planners Committee typically meets once a month and is the best forum when a project is citywide or relates to multiple communities. Given the complexity of a project or initiative, Committee members may need sufficient time (two to three months) to return to their respective planning groups to obtain feedback so that they can deliberate and provide a recommendation.

Consider lead time prior to public hearings:

- Community-specific projects may need to be presented to the planning group two to three months prior to making docket preparations to go to Hearing Officer, Planning Commission and/or City Council. This will depend on whether a planning group typically utilizes a standing subcommittee to discuss projects in detail before the planning group makes a recommendation.
- Projects that are citywide in scope can consider starting their engagement process with the Community Planners Committee at the start of the outreach phase of the project. The Community Planners Committee typically forms subcommittees to discuss projects in more detail over a period of two meetings or two months prior to the meeting where the Community Planners Committee renders their recommendation.

Before the community planning group or Community Planners Committee meeting:

- Provide any PowerPoint presentation or background information about the project in advance (so that it can be included as an attachment(s) with the release of the agenda 72 hours prior to the meeting) to help inform planning group/Community Planners Committee members prior to the meeting. PowerPoint presentations should include links to any webpages or other background information related to the project.

During the community planning group or the Community Planners Committee meeting:

- Provide a concise presentation at the meeting with an opportunity for the planning group/Community Planners Committee members and the public to either ask questions at intervals during the presentation or after the presentation has concluded.
- The community planning group/Community Planners Committee may ask clarifying questions of the presenter(s), then allow for public comment/questions. After public comment is closed, the community planning group members/Community Planners Committee members may have comment/questions before a motion is offered to provide a recommendation and a vote is conducted.

After the planning group or Community Planners Committee meeting:

- Provide written responses directly to the Chairperson for any questions raised by the planning group/Community Planners Committee or individual members that required additional information.
- Provide information back to the planning group/Community Planners Committee regarding how their input was considered as part of a project or initiative. This can be done as a report-out from staff, an information item on the community planning group/Community Planners Committee agenda or a written response directly to the Chairperson.

Working with Community-based Organizations

About community-based organizations (CBOs)
Community-based organizations (CBOs) are nonprofit or grassroots organizations that advocate for specific policies, deliver community services or provide support to a specific area or population of people. These organizations typically have deep connections to the communities they serve and significant experience with on-the-ground, culturally competent engagement. Culturally competent engagement is the use of knowledge of unique, dynamic cultural values to respectfully and effectively engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Role of CBOs in public participation
CBOs' established trust and credibility within their communities may allow for more effective engagement, particularly with underrepresented or diverse groups. They can excel at culturally appropriate and accessible outreach. Additionally, CBOs can provide insight into the local stakeholder landscape and share input on preferred/effective engagement techniques in a community. CBO meetings can be opportunities to meet community members in a familiar environment.

Ways to work with CBOs
City staff should consider working with CBOs during citywide or community-focused projects where their expertise and community connections align with the project's goals. For citywide projects, it is important to identify CBOs whose mission and expertise correspond to the specific topics or objectives of the project. Consider researching beyond established organizations to find grassroots groups and informal community networks that may have strong community trust but limited formal infrastructure. Bringing CBOs into the process early can allow for the co-development of effective engagement strategies. However, staff should remain mindful of the capacity and budget constraints faced by many CBOs, as well as the potential for engagement fatigue from repeated requests by multiple agencies.

Paid partnerships such as grants or a contract for services can support CBOs' capacity to participate when projects budgets can accommodate this. All contracted work with CBOs is to comply with the City's Municipal Code Sections 22.3208 and 22.3210 and Purchasing and Contracting regulations.

For paid partnerships with CBOs:

- Consider providing a portion of the funding upfront once the CBO is onboarded. This approach helps alleviate the financial burden of carrying costs, particularly for smaller organizations.
- Consider implementing a streamlined application process for CBOs that captures essential information for contracting and outlines the proposed approach to the work. The application form should be designed to minimize the time required to

complete it (see template application). This approach can help engage CBOs with varying capacities. It is also important to recognize that smaller CBOs may have limited capacity to participate in all aspects of the partnership. For instance, some organizations may only be able to attend coalition meetings or support engagement events, but not both. Despite this, smaller CBOs can still offer valuable insights and opportunities and should be encouraged to apply. Their proposals may reflect a reduced scope of services with a correspondingly lower budget than the maximum available.

- Establish clear guidelines from the beginning. This includes clearly outlining the desired engagement outcomes, the specific input required and any demographic data collection requests. Providing engagement templates or resources such as flyers, posters, fillable forms or surveys can help ensure clarity and streamline communication.
    - While CBOs may have an advocacy arm of their organization, it is important to set expectations that CBO staff remain impartial about the project and engagement outcomes when serving in a contracted engagement role with the City.
- Reasonable time should be allotted for CBOs to develop their engagement plans, and flexibility should be maintained in case project goals or expectations shift. Allow CBOs the flexibility to design and implement outreach and engagement strategies in ways that best align with the needs of their communities.
- Report back to CBOs to share project outcomes and demonstrate how public input influenced decisions to foster trust and long-term relationships.

Working with Council Offices

About Council offices

Each councilmember represents the interests of their respective council districts and has an office supported by staff members who represent the councilmember, liaise with community members and advise on various policy issues.

Role of Council offices in public participation

Council offices have established relationships with neighborhood organizations and community leaders in their district and can help with information-sharing. Council offices maintain community-specific email lists and newsletters that they use to relay important news and updates to their constituents, which can broaden project outreach. Council staff may also be able to provide valuable community insights that can inform projects, while helping to facilitate engagement from their constituents.

Ways to work with Council offices

City staff should work with Council offices during key stages of project development (e.g. stakeholder identification), particularly when a project involves a specific council district or aligns with a councilmember's interests. Work with Council offices by following any communication protocols set by the department. Typical contacts from Council offices who can help share public engagement opportunities include the Communications/Digital Director, Community Engagement Director and Community Representatives. Staff may consider:

- Sharing opportunities for a councilmember(s) to participate in a public engagement event, especially if it takes place in their district or the topic falls within their interest area.
- Asking Council offices to spread the word during the public engagement implementation phase. Provide council staff advance notice of any public engagement events in the Councilmember’s district so they can help share the word with constituents.
- Consulting the Legislative Calendar and Docket Closing Calendar (City staff only) to coordinate briefings with the Council offices to ensure that Councilmembers have ample time to review and respond to relevant proposals or information prior to public hearings. Each City Council Committee has a specific area of responsibility.

Working with Neighborhood Associations

About neighborhood associations
Neighborhood associations or town councils are voluntarily organized groups of residents that work to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhood or community. These groups may deal with a range of concerns that affect neighborhoods and communities such as business improvement, crime, speeding traffic, neighborhood beautification, nuisance issues, etc.

Neighborhood associations may run or sponsor local civic events such as block parties, town hall meetings and neighborhood clean-ups. They also provide opportunities at their meetings to exchange information and hear from local officials. Neighborhood associations can vary in the geographic area they represent. Their purview can be community-wide, but typically covers specific neighborhoods.

Role of neighborhood associations in public participation
Neighborhood associations are typically made up of residents, local business owners and representatives from other local community organizations. They have a deep understanding of the unique needs, concerns and priorities of their neighborhoods. This allows them to offer valuable perspectives on various local issues, including strengthening neighborhood identity, improving infrastructure and enhancing safety.

Bringing neighborhood associations into the process early can allow for the co-development of effective engagement strategies. Staff can also work with neighborhood associations to share information and/or receive input about local projects such as infrastructure improvements, policy initiatives or new public facilities. Neighborhood associations can help inform City staff about stakeholder interests and local events for public engagement opportunities. Neighborhood association meetings can be opportunities to meet community members in a familiar environment.

Ways to work with neighborhood associations
- Setting up an interview with a neighborhood association representative(s) can help staff understand who may be interested in a project and local perspectives on the topic.
- Participate in neighborhood association-sponsored community events to share information on a project and/or obtain input.
- Attend neighborhood association meetings. Most active neighborhood associations have websites that provide their meeting information as well as identify a point of contact who is usually their association chairperson, president or secretary.
- When presenting to a neighborhood association:
    - Providing informational material in advance is helpful so that the neighborhood association can disseminate background material to interested attendees prior to the meeting.

- Provide any handouts of relevant material, such as a fact sheet or copy of the PowerPoint presentation.
- Present information about the project/input opportunity and allow members of the neighborhood association and the public to ask questions.
- Provide contact information for any follow-up questions after the meeting.
- After the presentation, provide written responses to any questions or inquiries that were raised.
- Report back to the association about how input was considered, if applicable. This may consist of a brief, informational report at a subsequent in-person or virtual meeting or reaching out to the chairperson with an email update.

INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

Introduction

Inclusive Engagement Techniques and Approaches equips staff with a variety of options for how to conduct public outreach and engagement through tip sheets for more than 30 different engagement techniques or approaches. These techniques and approaches can help the City effectively share information and gather public input in a way that best suits the nature of the project, the public's preferences and available resources.

These techniques and approaches can be adapted and modified to suit individual project needs. The list is not exhaustive, so additional techniques or approaches not included here can be considered as well. Staff should consult with management when selecting, planning and implementing techniques and approaches. See *Step 6: Create and Implement a Public Engagement Plan* for additional considerations for choosing techniques or approaches. When implementing techniques or approaches, staff should communicate their purpose to participants to provide transparency about how the public is being invited to participate. Staff may also consider providing participation support to make public engagement more accessible and decrease barriers to participation.

Staff may take photos or videos to document engagement techniques and/or increase awareness of public engagement opportunities. When doing so, staff should post public notice(s) on the premises in a visible area, and for facilitated events consider having the facilitator announce that photos will be taken (providing an option for participants to indicate a preference to not have their photo taken e.g. by wearing a discreet dot sticker).

Each tip sheet outlines the technique or approach's definition, when it can be used, how to implement it, an estimate for resources needed and considerations for how to make it more inclusive. The parameters below define the resource estimations for each technique or approach:

	Minimal	**Moderate**	**High**
Cost	Less than $1,000	$1,000 to $40,000	Exceeding $40,000
Time	One to three weeks	One to three months	More than three months
Capacity	One to two people	Three to four people	A team (five or more people)

These estimates can aid staff in selecting, planning and implementing engagement techniques or approaches based on their project budget, timeline and staff/consultant capacity.

Appreciative Inquiry

What is it?

Appreciative inquiry is a positive approach to decision-making that leverages strengths instead of weaknesses to collect public input. This approach can be used to foster imagination and shared visioning to create positive change.

When to use it

Appreciative inquiry can be implemented in established groups of participants that know the project well, such as project-specific groups, to facilitate ideas for improvements. It has four phases: *Inquire, Imagine, Innovate* and *Implement*.

How to do it

Conducting appreciative inquiry may occur over several days, such as over the course of a series of project-specific group meetings. Each phase may take at least two hours to complete.

Prior to conducting the four phases of appreciative inquiry, organize the room in a way conducive to open conversation such as using round tables or arranging chairs into a circle.

1. *Inquire: Appreciate what is*

In this phase, discuss the project topic and aspects of it that are the most cherished or successful. Determine why those components were successful to later capitalize on them.

Example: The City establishes a working group to provide input on how to enhance urban green spaces. Questions that staff ask the working group for this phase of inquiry might include:

- "Can you share a positive experience you've had in one of the city's parks?"
- "What features of our green spaces do you most enjoy?"

The information gathered during this phase might reveal that certain parks are beloved because of their scenic beauty, while others are valued for their community programs or play infrastructure.

2. *Imagine: Imagine what might be*

The *Imagine* phase capitalizes on the strengths identified in the *Inquire* phase to suggest key project components or improvements.

Example: City staff encourage working group members to imagine their ideal park or green space. Questions might include:

- "What would an ideal green space look like in your neighborhood?"
- "What new features or activities would enhance your experience of these spaces?"

This phase might lead to ideas like implementing seasonal native plantings, establishing year-round youth and adult community programming or building shade structures for use on hot days.

3. *Innovate: Determine what should be*

The *Innovate* phase sets a strategic vision for the future based on the suggestions that surfaced in the *Imagine* phase.

Example: The working group envisions:

- Beautiful and inclusive green spaces that strengthen the community and encourage time spent outside, leading to increased economic development and tourism.
- Programming and infrastructure that provides opportunities for activity in all seasons.

4. *Implement: Create what could be*

The *Implement* phase sets a timeline and roles to support the goals set in previous phases.

Example: The working group suggests that the City release a request for proposals for contractors to begin transforming the existing green spaces according to their vision within the next five years.

Cost: Minimal	Appreciative inquiry is a free approach that can be used in various engagement event settings without additional costs.
Time: Moderate to High	Planning for this approach may take at least a few weeks. Implementing this approach can take anywhere from eight hours to a few months.
Capacity: Minimal to Moderate	A few staff can plan and host the meeting(s), depending on how many participants are involved and how detailed the desired input is.

Other considerations

- Consider surveying or polling participants before and after conducting appreciative inquiry to understand changes in project-related sentiment over time, if any.

How to make it more inclusive:

- Having small groups discuss at each phase and later share out ideas with the larger group may encourage participation from people less comfortable speaking in front of others.

Arts-based Engagement

What is it?
Arts-based engagement involves using artistic methods and activities to engage the public in projects. These methods could include community-based art, applied theatre techniques, artist showcases, storytelling and other creative formats.

When to use it
Arts-based engagement is particularly effective in helping to access creative solutions for complex issues, cultivate community relationships and connect with intergenerational groups. These methods can help gather input on community values, provide opportunity for community expression and create a sense of ownership and pride among community members.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Consider how effective the activity will be at reaching the intended audience and achieving engagement goals.
  - Choose an activity. Conducting informal interviews with community members can help inform what type of activity they would want to participate in. Examples include:
    - Community-based art such as murals, poetry, photography, drawing, story or comic books and art exhibitions featuring community submissions.
    - Applied theater such as role play, interview theater or playback theater.
    - Artist showcases in which professional artists (visual artists, musicians, dancers, spoken word artists etc.) respond to the project topic, allowing the public a chance to respond and reflect.
    - Immersive art installations that engage a variety of senses so that the public can gain an experiential understanding of the project.
  - Determine whether staff can facilitate the activity or consider working with local artists or arts-focused community-based organizations for facilitation and programming support. Collaborate with these partners to explore how different art forms can be used to engage the public.
  - Create a logistics plan for the activity as needed.
  - Provide adequate lead time for production of any elements for the activity such as printed materials, props or art supplies. Verify proper licensing and attribution for any existing artwork being used.

  - Conduct outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media. Highlight the creative and interactive nature of the event.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact people and organizations that may be particularly interested in the topic.
- **During**
  - Facilitate the event according to the logistics plan to guide the activity, encourage participation and interpret any results.
  - Reinforce the idea that there is no right or wrong approach to art, as it is a personal experience. Prioritize authenticity and creativity.
  - Document artistic outputs and discussions through photographs, videos and/or notes.
- **After**
  - Compile, digitize and review collected input to inform project decision-making.
  - Consider sharing the outcomes of the engagement through briefings, social media and/or the project webpage.
  - Consider how the art might be sustained or grow over time. A mural could last for years, and a performance or temporary exhibit could inspire future initiatives or partnerships.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs can vary from minimal to several thousand dollars depending on the scale and complexity of the artistic activities, including materials, artist fees and venue rentals.
Time: Moderate to High	Planning and executing arts-based engagement can require a month or more.
Capacity: Moderate to High	A team is typically needed to support arts-based engagement, including facilitator(s) and logistical support.

Other considerations

- Consider the audiovisual needs (projector, microphones, screen, etc.) of the arts-based activity.

How to make it more inclusive

- Consider potential artists/art forms that are unique, representative and familiar to the engaged community. This can encourage participation, build trust and communicate inclusive intention.
- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.

Briefings

What is it?
A briefing is a short meeting that serves to inform a group about a project. Briefings can help staff inform the public about a project and generate interest in participation.

When to use it
Briefings are ideal for sharing information and clarifying specific aspects of a project. They are particularly useful at significant project milestones, such as launch of a project, release of a draft for public input, or reporting back about how an engagement process was conducted.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Online briefings lasting no longer than 30 minutes are encouraged. Another alternative is to attend a group's standing meeting and provide a briefing as part of their agenda.
        - Consider recording an online briefing to share project information with more stakeholders.
    - For in-person briefings, choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
- **During**
    - Demonstrate awareness of attendees' interests and how that aligns with the project.
    - Cover the 5Ws and 1H: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. Be clear about how people can participate and how decisions will be made.
    - Use clear, simple and inclusive language.
    - Discuss next steps.
- **After**
    - If the briefing was recorded, work with the department's Public Information Officer to publish the video on the City's YouTube channel.
        - Share the link to the video with stakeholders.
    - Send a follow-up email with any relevant materials.

Cost: Minimal	Briefings are free.
Time: Minimal	Briefings could take up to a few weeks for preparation and review, while briefings themselves are typically accomplished within 30 minutes.
Capacity: Minimal	Briefings can be conducted by one or two staff.

Other considerations

- Consider the timing of the briefing to ensure maximum attendance, avoiding conflicts with other community events or major holidays.

How to make it more inclusive

- Follow document accessibility best practices for briefing materials.
- Ask if the briefing audience will need translation or interpretation.

Comment Forms

What is it?
Comment forms or comment cards can be used to collect public feedback about projects in hard copy or web form. The forms provide an opportunity for the public to write succinct suggestions and ideas about a project for decision-makers' consideration.

When to use it
Digital comment forms typically live on the project webpage and are useful for tracking general comments throughout the lifecycle of a project. Printed comment forms are better for tracking targeted input at specific stages of the project.

Printed comment forms can be distributed and collected at public engagement events, such as open houses, workshops and public meetings. This technique can help engage people who prefer to express their thoughts in writing and/or may be less comfortable verbalizing their input.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - For printed comment forms, consider including the following elements in a half-card (8.5 inch by 5.5 inch) format:
        - City logo.
        - Name of the project.
        - Event date.
        - A brief explanation of how comment forms will be used.
        - A place for optional submission of name, ZIP code and email. The form should explain that such information is optional and would be used to provide updates about the project/further opportunities for engagement.
        - Blank space for comments.
    - Online comment forms can be embedded directly within the webpage.
        - Prepare a landing page that thanks participants for their input and addresses the project's next steps.
- **During**
    - At the beginning of an engagement event, pass out comment forms and pens to all attendees.
    - Make an announcement about the comment forms. The agenda can include five to 10 minutes toward the end for people to write their comments.
    - Collect comment forms at the end of the event.

- **After**
  - Digitize printed comment forms as needed so they can be considered and included with other public input.
  - Pay special attention to comments requesting information or public records in order to follow up**.**

Cost: Minimal	Digital comment forms are free, and there are minimal costs associated with printed comment forms, such as printing and providing pens.
Time: Minimal	Once collected, processing comment forms could take a few weeks, especially for comments needing to be translated and transcribed/digitized.
Capacity: Minimal	One to two staff members is generally enough to prepare, distribute, collect and process comment forms, depending on the volume of comments.

Other considerations

- If also distributing participant satisfaction surveys at an in-person engagement event, clarify that comment forms are meant to provide input about the project, while satisfaction surveys are intended to share feedback on the participation experience and activity(ies).

How to make it more inclusive

- Provide comment forms in additional language(s) based on the community(ies) being served.
- Follow document accessibility best practices.
- Use clear, simple, and inclusive language.

Community Cafés

What is it?

Community cafés are in-person events held in casual settings such as cafés, community centers or parks. They bring community members together over meals or refreshments to engage in conversations. Community cafés create a welcoming space where community members can discuss project ideas or share input with staff and other community members.

When to use it

Community cafés work particularly well for community-building. By creating a casual setting where people might feel more comfortable sharing their perspectives, community cafés can help gather public insights about complex issues.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Find a venue that is familiar and accessible to community members, such as a local café or community center.
        - Community members may be able to help identify suggestions for where to host the event.
        - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
        - If choosing a restaurant, café or other business, be mindful of the City's Administrative Regulation (AR) 95.65 regarding endorsements.
        - Check that food/refreshments are available for purchase or can be served at the chosen location.
    - Extend the invitation through multiple channels such as social media or partnerships with community-based organizations. Tailor the invitation to the intended audience and note whether meals/refreshments are being offered by the City or are self-host.
    - Identify staff able to participate and support the event. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
    - Plan open-ended conversation topics related to the project.

- **During**
    - Arrange food/refreshments at a single table or area.
    - Consider arranging seating in small groups of two to four people to encourage conversation.
    - Greet participants and provide an optional sign-in sheet to collect names and contact information for ongoing project updates.
    - The event may start with a brief introduction. However, as participants can come in and out freely, another option is to hand out simple flyers about the project and orient them to the space and how the event works.
    - Ask open-ended questions or prompts to guide the conversation and document input as needed.
    - Note any next steps in the project and future opportunities for engagement.
- **After**
    - Digitize any notes from discussions as well as sign-ups for project contact lists as needed.

Cost: Minimal	Community cafés can cost up to $1,000 when providing food for participants.
Time: Moderate	Planning a community café may take several weeks, depending on the level of outreach needed. The event itself usually lasts between one to three hours.
Capacity: Moderate to High	Community cafés are typically hosted by a team of at least three or more staff so that there are enough staff available to answer questions and facilitate community discussions.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance.
- Consider hosting the event at a locally owned businesses and providing participation support.
- Consider hosting community cafés at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
- Offer multiple ways for people to share their perspectives (e.g. verbally in small groups or writing on comment cards).
- Consider using flyers, QR codes and name tag stickers/buttons that staff can wear to encourage conversations about the project.

Community Mapping

What is it?

Community mapping is using maps to understand relationships between people, nature and buildings. It can involve identifying issues, patterns, opportunities and constraints related to a geographic area. Common formats for community mapping include:

- Traditional Approach: In this method, large-scale maps are printed, and people are invited to place sticky notes, dots or other items on the map in response to specific questions.
- Mental Maps Approach: This approach encourages people to draw their own community maps. Participants can identify landmarks, barriers, edges, nodes and districts based on their perceptions. It can make community mapping less technical and more user centered.
- Digital Map/Crowdsourcing Approach: Using a digital platform, people contribute information, observations and other comments on a web-based shared map related to a specific topic.

When to use it

Community mapping is useful to understand community members' perceptions regarding a place and their lived experiences. Mapping exercises can gather detailed input to identify areas within a community that could benefit from new projects or interventions, assess the effectiveness of current projects and/or identify areas that require attention.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Decide the area that the map will show and which elements will be highlighted on the map (e.g. streets, open spaces, commercial areas, landmarks, neighborhoods).
    - Make the map using tools such as ArcGIS, Google Maps or Adobe Illustrator.
        - If choosing a Digital Map/Crowdsourcing Approach, consider using a platform that is geo-enabled where ideas and feedback can be captured directly into a geodatabase via the on-screen digital map.
        - Esri tools are the most commonly used for these types of maps. Consider using Survey123 or ArcGIS Portal Web Maps for collecting geospatial data via an online map. Contact the Department of Information Technology, Performance & Analytics Department or the department's Information Systems Analyst for assistance with these types of maps.

  - Create prompt questions or instructions for the map activity to gather the type of quantitative or qualitative input desired.
    - Consider standardizing the questions and options with a specific legend or categories for responses and input to improve the integrity of the information collected and enable better analysis.
  - Decide if map will be printed or displayed virtually for online engagement.
    - Post the map onto the project webpage as needed.
      - Static maps online should be in PDF format 300 pixels per inch (ppi) or higher
      - Digital maps should be hosted from the City's ArcGIS Portal environment and data sourced to authoritative sources as much as possible such as SanGIS. Consult with the Department of Information Technology and/or the department's Information Systems Analyst as needed.
  - Conduct outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.

- **During**
  - Present the map to participants and explain its components. Share how participants can provide input.
  - Record participants' input and take photos of the final map.
  - Note any next steps or future opportunities for engagement.
  - Optionally allow participants to share feedback about the community mapping activity through participant satisfaction surveys.
- **After**
  - Compile the data into a comprehensive format to identify patterns, trends and key themes to understand the public's needs, opportunities and constraints.
  - For digital maps with location-based data, consider storing this data in a geodatabase or hosted feature service.
    - Consult with Department of Information Technology's GIS team or Performance & Analytics Department for further guidance.
  - Share any findings, reports and follow-up information with participants and stakeholders.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Smaller maps or digital-only versions generally have minimal costs or are free. The cost to print and mount maps depends on the size, thickness and quantity of maps. A license or subscription to digital mapping software may cost several thousand dollars depending on the selected vendor and/or the length of time needed for the engagement.
Time: Moderate	Designing and printing the map can take about a month. Simple digital maps or minor updates can be completed more quickly. Setting up an interactive digital map platform is more time-intensive.
Capacity: Minimal to Moderate	Creating a simple map requires one to two staff. Larger projects or those requiring extensive community engagement may need three to four staff to create the map, facilitate the activity and analyze input.

Other considerations

- Consider the map's size and check that it fits within the vehicles used for transportation. If planning individualized mapping activities, supply clipboards with small map print-outs.
- Multiple maps can be used in a workshop or open house setting to obtain input on a variety of topics such as understanding where potential park opportunities are in a community, which streets have a lot of speeding traffic or where barriers and access issues to public facilities and services exist or are perceived.
- Consider any audiovisual needs (projector, microphones, screen, etc.) for the mapping activity.

How to make it more inclusive

- Check that maps follow document accessibility best practices and that important components of the map are easy to spot.
- Consider conducting community mapping activities at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
- Use clear, simple and inclusive language.
- Translate materials and provide interpretation services as needed.
- Consider providing participation support.

Community Office Hours

What is it?

Community office hours provide an opportunity for community members to meet one-on-one with staff for a short, focused session (typically 15 minutes). This setting allows for a more personal exchange where community members can share their input and ask any clarifying questions. These sessions can foster deeper understanding and connections between staff and the public and help community members refine and focus their feedback as they receive clarification.

When to use it

Community office hours are useful for projects that focus on a specific geographic area or impact a particular community, such as community plan updates or infrastructure projects. They are especially effective for addressing questions and building relationships with community members.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Identify staff able to participate and support the office hours. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
    - Consider providing office hour availability at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
    - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
    - Consider using Microsoft Bookings to create and manage meeting times and schedules. If multiple staff members are involved, simultaneous time slots can be set up and offered across different locations. This allows community members to easily view and schedule open times on staff's Outlook calendars, reducing the administrative burden on staff. For setup and configuration of Microsoft Bookings or other approved software, consult with the department's Information Systems Analyst and/or Department of Information Technology. Learn more about Microsoft Bookings.
    - Conduct outreach to invite participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media. Include details about the location, date, time and how to sign up for a time slot.
        - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may be particularly interested in the topic.
    - Update the project webpage with the same information and scheduling link so that anyone interested can easily sign up for office hours.

- **During**
  - Have relevant materials on hand such as draft documents, maps or other visual aids that can help facilitate the conversation.
  - Allow community members to ask questions and share ideas. Document their input. This could be done via a spreadsheet including the participant's name and contact information in case staff need to follow up with the participant.
  - Note any next steps in the project and future opportunities for engagement.
- **After**
  - Analyze the input to identify common themes and inform project decisions.
  - Follow up with people who had specific questions that staff was not able to answer in the moment.

Cost: Minimal	There is no cost for this technique outside of any room reservations and printing materials, if needed.
Time: Moderate	Planning community office hours can take about a month to create outreach materials and advertise the opportunity. Office hours can be hosted over the course of a few weeks.
Capacity: Minimal to Moderate	At least two and up to four staff are recommended to help advertise, conduct and analyze input from office hours, depending on the number of office hour sessions being conducted.

How to make it more inclusive

- Offer virtual office hours options via video conferencing platforms for people who cannot attend in person.
- Identify any language access needs in advance.
- Allow for some flexibility for walk-in sessions to accommodate participants who may not have scheduled ahead of time.

Email Notifications

What is it?
Email notifications are concise messages that communicate time-sensitive information to the public. Examples include project news, updates and invitations.

When to use it
Email notifications can be an effective outreach technique for sharing information, especially when there is already an established email list of interested stakeholders. Emails are appropriate for communicating project milestones such as the launch of a new webpage, the release of a draft or final document, opportunities available to provide input and decisions made by the City Council.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - City staff have used software such as Constant Contact, SalesMate, GovDelivery, Indigov and MailChimp to manage email lists and customize the format and content of email notifications.
    - Evaluate whether the project would benefit from creating its own email list. This approach is usually more effective for long-term projects. Work with the department's Public Information Officer/Communications Department and Web Services team to embed an email list sign-up form on a project webpage.
    - Determine if there are any existing email lists that should receive the email notification. Recipients should have opted in to receiving notifications.
- **During**
    - Email notifications should follow the City's Visual Style Guide and Writing Style Guide.
    - Emails can be sent instantly or scheduled for a desired date.
    - Send notifications from an official City email (ideally a monitored department or group email account) and have a clear and concise subject to prevent confusion or cause the email to be sent to spam.
    - Use the name customization feature to personalize the email, if available.
        - On Constant Contact this is the "insert greeting tag" tool. This allows staff to customize the greeting with the recipient's name, such as "Hello [First Name]."
    - Keep email notifications succinct and use clear and simple language.
    - Include relevant information, considering the 5 Ws - who, what, when, where and why? When developing content, anticipate potential questions or background information readers may need to fully understand the topic.

  - Clearly state any action the recipient is being asked to take or why the information shared is important.
    - Direct recipients to one clear button at the end of the email notification with a clear call to action such as "Take the survey," "Review the plan" or "View the agenda."
- **After**
  - Review open and click-through rates to inform future email development.

Cost: Minimal	There is a minimal cost for email marketing software such as Constant Contact. Check for any existing subscriptions.
Time: Minimal to Moderate	The preparation of emails usually takes a few hours or less to draft. Allow enough time in advance of distribution translation as necessary. If staff need to procure a new email notification software, it may take up to three months to establish a new account and agreement.
Capacity: Minimal	One team member can prepare emails, ensuring inclusion of all relevant content. It is recommended that staff send a test email to management for review to for clarity and consistency.

Other considerations

- Emails can be sent on an as-needed basis but keep a purposeful frequency so that recipients do not feel overwhelmed.
- Always make it easy to opt out or unsubscribe from the email.
- Links to social media accounts and webpages should be listed at the bottom of each email.
- The City's Connect Page provides a comprehensive overview of existing newsletters on various topics. This is a good place to direct community members if they are interested in communication from the City's various elected officials, departments and programs.
- Consider using Grammarly to support the development of email notifications.

How to make it more inclusive

- Follow document accessibility best practices.
  - To add alternative text on Constant Contact, select the box to add a picture, then select the desired image. Before clicking "Insert", select "Alt Text" at the bottom left of the pop-up. Write a brief description of the image, "Save and Close" and then insert the image.
- Consider translating the email into any languages needed for the email audience.
- Incorporate images and graphics of diverse groups of people.

Engagement through Service

What is it?

Engagements through service are public engagement efforts where staff and any partners collaboratively contribute to projects by providing a service or enhancing the community. This technique can be used to gather public input while also engaging community members in hands-on activities that improve local conditions. This technique can help motivate people to share their input on long-range planning or other project concepts that may seem intangible. The service activities can show community members how City policies can positively impact their communities.

When to use it?

Engagement through service supports public engagement with a direct, visible community impact. It is ideal for projects such as public space improvements and those at the involve or collaborate levels of engagement, offering a tangible way to build relationships, gather feedback and foster a sense of ownership among participants. Some examples of engagement through service include:

- Climate Resilient SD Living Wall. The City Planning Department partnered with the Copley-Price YMCA to build a living wall. Dozens of youth campers from the YMCA helped create the wall, which holds a variety of plants and succulents, to help remove air pollutants and reduce urban heat for years to come. Youth campers were also invited to participate in a sticker poll to help inform the plan. This project was part of the City's development of Climate Resilient SD, a plan to prepare for climate change and build greener, safer and more sustainable communities.
- Community Clean Up. The City Planning Department partnered with community-based organization Casa Familiar to host a community clean-up of a highway overpass that doubles as a pedestrian bridge in the San Ysidro area. The event was an opportunity to discuss environmental justice priorities as community members came together to improve their community's cleanliness. This event was part of the development of the City's Environmental Justice Element, which provides policies for the advancement of equitable, healthy and livable communities for all San Diegans.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Partner with community leaders and local organizations to identify a service and coordinate a service project that addresses a local need.
    - Collaborate with local organizations to recruit participants and leverage existing networks.
  - Conduct outreach to encourage participation as needed, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.

    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may have interest in participating.
- **During**
    - Develop a clear service project plan and share with any community partners, including materials, timeline, maintenance strategies and desired outcomes.
    - Determine if any permits are needed.
    - Provide a sign-in sheet to collect optional contact information of attendees to share ongoing project updates.
    - Share information with community members about the project topic and incorporate an engagement activity within the event and/or make them aware of avenues for future input (e.g. project-specific groups, workshops).
    - Document the project's impact through photos, videos and participant quotes.
- **After**
    - Collect and analyze any feedback from participants.
    - Share the outcomes and impacts of the project with the community through techniques such as newsletters, social media updates and briefings to maintain transparency and encourage ongoing engagement.

Cost: Minimal to High	Costs can vary significantly based on the scale and complexity of the service project. Simple, small-scale activities, like a community cleanup, can be inexpensive, while more complex activities that necessitate planning, design, construction and/or maintenance may require more significant investments.
Time: Minimal to High	The time required to plan and implement service projects depends on their scope and detail. Engagement through service may take under a month or up to several months to plan and implement.
Capacity: Moderate to High	The capacity needed for service projects varies with their complexity. A few staff may be needed to plan and implement a simple service project, but a team may be needed for a complex service project.

Other considerations

- For outdoor projects, check weather conditions in advance of the event.
    - Remind team members to dress accordingly.
    - If temperatures at 80°F or higher are anticipated, ensure water and shade are available and/or consider postponing the event.

- Obtain necessary permits, licenses or approvals from relevant City departments or other authorities and consider any legal implications or liabilities associated with the project, such as insurance requirements or waivers.
- Identify ongoing community involvement and stewardship opportunities, such as regular maintenance or programming related to the service project's outcomes.

How to make it more inclusive

- Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
- Incorporate cultural traditions, practices or art forms into the project to celebrate the community and foster a sense of pride and ownership among participants.
- Identify any language interpretation needs in advance.
- Consider providing participation support.

Fact Sheets

What is it?
Fact sheets are concise one to two-page documents that include essential information about a particular topic or project. They highlight facts and key points in a clear and simple format and may include bullet points, timelines, charts and images to facilitate understanding.

When to use it
Fact sheets are effective tools for building awareness and providing high-level project information in an easy-to-share format. They can be useful as quick reference documents and serve to convey essential information to the public, stakeholders and decision-makers, especially at the beginning phase of a project. Use fact sheets to distribute to stakeholders online, and in person at public engagement events.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Understand the project's key messages, including what the project seeks to address and how the public can participate.
    - Have the project logo on hand (reach out to the department's Public Information Officer or email the Communications Department if this is needed) and create a project group email account as needed.
- **During**
    - Use the fact sheet templates that are available on CityNet.
    - Fact sheets should follow the City's Writing Style Guide.
    - Use headings, subheadings and bullet points to organize information.
    - Information should be objective and fact-based. Use clear and simple language.
    - Include a link for people to learn more or participate. Include both the webpage URL and QR code when directing to a webpage.
    - Include contact information, such as a project group email account, for public inquiries. Using a group email account allows communication to be monitored without interruption, even if staff change over the lifetime of a project.
    - Use graphics such as images or icons to break up text, emphasize key data points and effectively and concisely convey information to people of various backgrounds.
    - If using images, check for proper licensing/attribution.
- **After**
    - Post on the project webpage and print copies for distribution at events or various locations as needed.

Cost: Minimal	Costs vary based on the quantity needed and distribution method (e.g. printing vs. digital only). Digital versions are cost-effective and easy to share via email or social media.
Time: Minimal	Fact sheets can be quick to produce with a few weeks required for content development, design and printing. Allow sufficient time for the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department review.
Capacity: Minimal	Fact sheets can be created by one key staff person, with support from the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department.

How to make it more inclusive

- Provide translated fact sheets as needed for the project audience.
- Check that digital fact sheets follow document accessibility best practices and are mobile-friendly.
- Work with local organizations to distribute for broader reach.

Flyers

What is it?
Flyers are a one-page outreach material, typically in an 8.5 inch by 11 inch page size, designed to share concise information about a project or event. Flyers often include key details such as date, location, contact information and a call to action. These typically combine text and graphics in a simple format, making them easily shareable and suitable for broad distribution.

When to use it
Flyers are effective for raising awareness about specific events, participation opportunities or time-sensitive information. They work well for promoting events or sharing information with communities in a targeted geographic area. Use them to quickly convey key messages in an easy-to-share format.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Clarify the purpose of the flyer and flyer audience. Determine the key message and/or call to action, such as attending an event, visiting a webpage or providing input.
    - Based on the project scope, consider using City-approved design software such as Canva or Adobe. If staff requires support from the Communications Department to create and/or print the flyers, provide the request to the department's Public Information Officer with two to three weeks' advance notice. If the department has no Public Information Officer, it is recommended to email the Communications Department for support.
    - Follow accessibility best practices by using high-contrast colors between text and background, as outlined in the City's Color Accessibility Guidelines. Choose colors that enhance legibility and avoid using color alone to convey meaning.
- **During**
    - Share with the department's Public Information Officer if applicable.
    - Use the flyer template that is available on CityNet.
    - Organize content with clear sections. Use bullet points, icons and white space to enhance readability.
    - Use high-contrast colors, large fonts and clear and simple language so all audiences can engage with the content.
    - Highlight essential information such as date, time, location and contact details.
        - Using a group email account for public inquiries allows communication to be monitored without interruption, even if staff change over the lifetime of a project.

    - Include a link to more detailed resources or public engagement opportunities. Include both the webpage URL and QR code when directing to a webpage.
    - Flyers should follow the City's Visual Style Guide and Writing Style Guide.
    - If using images, ensure they have proper licensing/attribution.

- **After**
    - Distribute flyers at public meetings, community events, high-traffic locations and with engagement partners. Flyers can also be mailed/emailed.
    - Post digital versions online in accessible formats that are mobile-friendly.
    - Consider posting physical flyers on bulletin boards at City facilities.
        - To distribute flyers to all City libraries, email a digital copy of the flyer to Central Library staff. The Central Library will share the flyer with all 37 branches. It may take up to two weeks for all branches to print and disseminate the flyers.
        - To distribute flyers to all recreation centers, coordinate with the Parks and Recreation Department staff located at the department's Balboa Park headquarters. The flyers can be distributed to 60 recreation centers and 15 pools.
    - If staff wish to post flyers at businesses or external organizations, ask for permission first.
    - After the publicized events, participation opportunities or time-sensitive information are over, ensure printed flyers are collected and recycled.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs vary based on the quantity needed and distribution method. Digital versions are cost-effective and easy to share via email or social media. Printing without bleeds is cheaper because it eliminates the need for trimming, reducing paper waste, production time, and overall printing costs. Mailing will add additional postage costs.
Time: Minimal	These materials are quick to produce, but time should be allocated for design, printing and distribution. Communications/Publishing Services receives over one hundred requests each month. Allow sufficient time for internal review and approval.
Capacity: Minimal	Flyers can be created by one key staff person or with support from the Communications Department's Creative Services team. Distributing flyers may require additional volunteers or staff.

Other considerations

- Distribute flyers well in advance of events or deadlines to maximize participation.
- Flyers should not be considered a substitute for an official/legally required meeting notice.
- Consider the duration flyers will be displayed and any time-sensitive information.
- Use recycled paper and recycle printed flyers once they are no longer in use.
- City-prepared flyers are considered a public record and should be retained in a manner consistent with the department's record retention policy.

Additional outreach material options

- Posters and Banners: These are large, printed materials designed to grab attention in communal or high-traffic spaces. Unlike flyers, they are meant to be seen from a distance, so prioritize bold visuals, concise text, and high contrast for readability. Posters and banners should be durable, especially for outdoor use, so consider weather-resistant materials.
- Brochures: Folded materials, such as tri-folds, allow for a structured and detailed presentation of information. Unlike single-sheet flyers, brochures offer multiple panels to organize content. Focus on concise content, engaging visuals, and ensuring the brochure is easy to read and navigate.
- Door Hangers: Narrow, vertical printed materials designed to be placed directly on door handles make these ideal for on-the-ground outreach. They should have enough weight to hang securely without falling.
- Postcards: These are compact, double-sided materials often used for direct mail campaigns. When designing, communicate key information clearly and consider visual appeal to capture attention quickly.

How to make it more inclusive

- Translate materials as needed for the project audience.
- Incorporate images and graphics of diverse groups of people.
- Check that digital flyers follow document accessibility best practices and are mobile-friendly.
- Work with local organizations to distribute materials for broader reach.

Focus Groups

What is it?

Focus groups are a way of interviewing a group of people to gather qualitative insights about a project. In a focus group, a small number of participants (typically no more than 10) meet once to provide their insights for a pre-defined purpose. Focus group participants are selected to either be a representative sample of the public or provide a certain perspective staff wish to learn more about. Focus groups can be held in-person or virtually.

When to use it

Focus groups can help staff identify key issues, understand community perspectives or gather input about more complex topics through open-ended questions. They are especially useful for gathering feedback that might not surface in surveys or one-on-one interviews. Focus groups can complement quantitative data by providing a clear picture of what people think and feel.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Determine the desired input from the focus group and participant selection criteria.
  - Recruit participants according to the selection criteria through outreach channels such as email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations that may be able to spread the word among people who fit the selection criteria.
  - Focus groups are highly facilitated engagement events. Select a facilitator. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
  - Develop an agenda that includes:
    - The project background
    - The focus group's purpose/how the information will be used
    - Open-ended questions to ask the focus group
  - Choose a method for capturing public input and prepare all necessary materials.
    - Methods may include recording the meeting, using a notetaker or writing on flip charts.
  - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
  - When scheduling the focus group date and time, consider participants' availability.
  - Send out focus group invitations and material for pre-reading, if applicable.

    - If in-person, organize the venue in a way conducive to open conversation, such as using round tables or arranging chairs into a circle.
- **During**
    - The facilitator should share productive engagement event guidelines or create engagement event agreements.
    - The facilitator should guide the conversation and create an environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their candid thoughts.
    - Document and record input.
    - If demographic makeup of the group was not predetermined, collect optional demographic information at the end from participants in written form, and note any next steps or future opportunities for engagement.
- **After**
    - Transcribe the collected input and analyze major themes from the information gathered.
    - Follow up with participants to thank them, share findings and reiterate how their input will influence the project/decision-making process.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs may include printing materials, consultant facilitator(s), venue rentals and participation support.
Time: Moderate	Focus groups typically meet once but require thorough preparation. It may take a few months to recruit participants, prepare materials and host the focus group. Focus groups themselves typically last no more than two hours.
Capacity: Moderate	Three to four staff may be needed to recruit participants, prepare materials, record input and analyze findings.

Other considerations:

- Consider any audiovisual needs (projector, microphones, screen, etc.) for the focus group.

How to make it more inclusive:

- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Host the focus group at a familiar location for participants.

Game-based Approaches

What is it?
Game-based approaches integrate game-like elements, such as challenges and competition, into public outreach and engagement efforts to increase participation by making public engagement more interactive, enjoyable and repeatable.

Game-based approaches may take multiple forms, including in-person activities (e.g., board games, card games, puzzles) or virtual experiences (e.g., mobile applications, online simulations, digital leaderboards).

When to use it
Game-based approaches can help foster learning and information retention. These approaches can help engage youth and are particularly valuable for longer duration projects where continued awareness and involvement is important.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Design activities and select game platforms that accommodate different awareness and digital access levels. Activities could include:
    - Online, mobile or video games that may provide information about project topics.
    - Scavenger hunts where participants find items or places related to the project.
    - Puzzles that can inform about a project.
    - Challenges or tasks for participants to complete.
  - Choose any game incentives.
    - Options include points, badges, leaderboards, social media recognition, certificates or prizes.
  - Conduct outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may be particularly interested in the project/topic.
- **During**
  - Encourage competition or collaboration by using team-based challenges or personal progress tracking.
  - Consider making participation visible with display leaderboards, progress bars or community goal tracking to show collective impact.
  - As participants complete activities, consider providing game incentives.

- **After**
  - Optionally allow participants to share feedback about the engagement event through participant satisfaction surveys.
    Recognize any top scoring participants and share any next steps or future opportunities for participation.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Game-based approaches can range from simple, free activities to moderate costs for platforms with built-in game mechanics.
Time: Moderate	Developing game-based approaches requires planning, testing and refining mechanics before launch. This may take a few months.
Capacity: Minimal	One to two staff may be needed to create a platform, monitor participation and track engagement outcomes.

How to make It more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance.
- Use mobile-friendly platforms to broaden participation while considering digital access levels.

Examples of game-based approaches in action

- Boston Community PlanIt – A digital game where community members earn points by discussing city planning issues.
- Hawaii Digital Government Gamification – Community members state-wide earn badges and track their contributions (e.g., saving time, paper and mileage) when accessing government services.
- Alaska Division of Elections RankedVote – Educating voters on ranked choice voting by hosting interactive contests, including an "I Voted" sticker design competition.

Hotlines

What is it?

Hotlines are dedicated phone lines that provide a direct channel for community members to access general information, provide comments and receive support. They may offer real-time access to project team members or automated recorded messages allowing callers to leave a voicemail that staff can respond to. Examples include the Pure Water San Diego Program's hotline for community inquiries about construction projects and the Utilities Undergrounding Program hotline for questions regarding undergrounding electrical and communication utility lines.

When to use it

Hotlines are helpful when ongoing communication with the public is needed for large-scale projects. They are particularly effective for reaching individuals who may have limited access to the internet and addressing immediate concerns or questions from the public.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Clearly define hotline scope and objectives.
  - Choose a hotline provider based on the necessary functions, such as an automated system or live support from staff.
  - Designate a phone number for the hotline and establish hours of operation.
  - Create a script for the hotline's outgoing/general message to ensure clarity and consistency.
    - The recorded message should include the method of communication for the follow-up response and response time frame. Doing so can reassure callers that their inquiry is being addressed.
  - Test the hotline system to ensure callers can hear messages clearly and access all call functions.
  - If calls will be answered by staff members, designate and schedule knowledgeable staff to answer hotlines and provide instructions for hotline management.
    - Consider developing an FAQ document that can be referenced by staff answering the hotline. Update the document regularly as the project progresses.
  - Share the hotline with the public and interested stakeholders through channels such as using email notifications, flyers, or social media.
  - Determine a procedure for handling inquiries outside of the scope of the hotline.

- **During**
  - Optimize the collection of input from hotline interactions by using tools such as the example call log below and feedback forms to organize feedback.
  - Collect contact information from callers who want to receive updates on the project or department, so they can be added to distribution lists.

Project Name							
Tracking #	*Call Date & Time*	*Caller Name*	*Duration*	*Phone Number*	*Email*	*Comments / Notes*	*Follow-Up/Referred to Contact*

- **After**
  - Periodically review input received via the hotline.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs include personnel time, hotline setup and software, training for hotline contacts and promotional materials.
Time: Moderate	Setting up a hotline requires a few months for preparation to ensure all materials, training and logistics are in place.
Capacity: Moderate to High	A medium to large team is needed to support a hotline. Staff may establish and promote the hotline, manage calls and track inquiries and comments.

Other considerations

- Regularly check the hotline system for technical issues and recorded messages as needed.

How to make it more inclusive

- Consider including options for messages in multiple languages and adaptive software for people with disabilities.
- Promote the hotline in community gathering locations and events.
- Consider making the hotline toll-free.

Information Kiosks

What is it?

An information kiosk is a stand-alone structure at a physical location designed to provide key project information to the public. It can be static and feature printed materials like flyers and maps or digital and interactive to feature things like videos or surveys.

When to use it

Kiosks can be useful throughout a project's duration to share key information and materials to passersby. These can be used to increase public awareness about a project.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Design the kiosk and choose an installation location that will meet the intended audience.
        - For instance, for a project about improving public transportation options, work with MTS to determine feasibility of installing a temporary kiosk at a trolley station.
        - Use existing kiosks when possible. Some organizations or businesses may have kiosks where City information could be displayed. The City of San Diego currently has a partnership with the Downtown San Diego Partnership and IKE Smart City for digital interactive kiosks throughout Downtown. Contact the Economic Development Department if there is a project of interest for the kiosks that would be relevant for people living, working or visiting in Downtown to learn about or engage in.
    - Choose kiosk locations with high pedestrian activity or where people come together. For kiosks in the right-of-way, contact the asset-managing department (the department that manages the specific type of asset such as Library, Parks and Recreation, Transportation etc.) and determine if any permits are needed.
    - For digital information kiosks, check that the location has adequate internet and/or power connections.

    - Identify any outreach materials or input opportunities to be displayed at the kiosk such as:
        - Surveys
        - Flyers
        - Videos or photos
        - Calendar of upcoming events
        - Email sign up list
- **During**
    - Set up the kiosk at the identified location following the manufacturer's instructions.
    - Regularly check on the kiosk and update outreach materials with any new project information as needed.
- **After**
    - Assess effectiveness by tracking metrics such as number of flyers taken, email sign-ups or content interactions.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Utilizing existing kiosks can help reduce costs by repurposing available infrastructure. Purchasing or renting digital kiosks can be more costly.
Time: Moderate to High	Planning for new information kiosks can take several months, including the time required to obtain any necessary permits depending on the type of kiosk and location.
Capacity: Minimal	Information kiosks may require two people to plan and organize. Once the kiosk is set up, one person should be designated to monitor/update/replenish materials as needed.

How to make it more inclusive

- Translate kiosk material as needed based on community demographics.
- Place kiosks at an accessible height.
- Include audio output or screen reader compatibility to so people with limited vision and/or hearing can access the kiosk.

Interviews

What is it?
Interviews are brief discussions with the public to learn about and understand their knowledge, perspectives and ideas about a project or topic. Interviews can also be used to gather opinions about which outreach and engagement techniques or approaches work best in a community. Interviews can follow a prepared list of questions or be more flexible.

When to use it
If possible, interviews should be conducted during the beginning stages of a project as the input received can help inform research, goals development and exploration of potential alternatives.

Interviews can be used to fill any gaps in quantitative information gathered during the engagement process by highlighting lived experience and local expertise.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Identify the objectives of the interviews, including the interview topics and what kinds of input can meaningfully address the goals of the project.
  - Identify who should be interviewed depending on their role or interest/expertise.
  - Assess how many interviews will take place and the expected length of interviews.
  - Determine whether an online or in-person interview would work better.
    - For in-person interviews, choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
  - Write an outline for the interview, with specific questions and a brief introduction explaining why interviews are happening and what the collected information will be used for.
  - Establish logistics.
    - Consider whether interviewees will need any accommodations or language interpretation services.
    - Consider providing participation support, and if so, include that information in the communications.
    - Establish a designated interviewer and notetaker.
    - Develop a notetaking template for consistency in how notes are being captured where there might be different staff participating in interviews.
      - Determine whether notes will be posted publicly, which will inform the structure of the notetaking template.

  - Develop and distribute invitations.
    - Consider translation/interpretation needs.
    - Evaluate whether it may be helpful to share the interview questions ahead of time to give participants more time to consider their answers.
- **During**
  - Share with interviewee(s) the objectives of the interview, how their input will be used and remind them of the importance of hearing their perspective.
  - If the interview is structured, let the person know that you'll be following a script and list of questions. If unstructured, there may be more flexibility for them to speak on a particular topic for a longer period and other questions may come up.
  - During the interview, use a friendly tone and avoid leading questions or challenging an interviewee's perspective.
  - Ask how they would like to participate in the engagement process going forward and if they would like to be included in distribution list(s) for project updates.
- **After**
  - Assess and share notes as needed.

Cost: Minimal	Interviews can be free, depending on if participation support is provided.
Time: Moderate	Preparing, identifying interviewees and conducting interviews will take several weeks to a few months. Interviews themselves usually take no more than an hour.
Capacity: Minimal to Moderate	Two to four people can help plan, interview and take notes, depending on the amount of interviews being conducted.

Other considerations

- Interviews are distinct from briefings, which are primarily used to share information, whereas an interview is used to seek information.
- Print interview questions for participants if conducting the interviews in person.
- Do not record interviews unless staff have previously disclosed the purpose of the recording, and the participant expressly consents to the recording and such consent is documented. Recording can make it difficult for participants to share openly.
- Consider providing participation support.

How to make it more inclusive

- Use clear, simple and inclusive language when asking questions.
- Consider hosting interviews at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.

Meeting in a Box

What is it?

A meeting in a box is a collection of materials available for community members to pick up, download or receive to host a meeting about a project on their own/without the involvement of staff. Materials may include any information necessary to understand the project, visual aids and worksheets to help guide the discussion and collect input.

When to use it

This technique may be helpful when there is high interest from stakeholder groups for involvement but limited staff capacity to host public meetings or workshops. It can allow community members to take ownership of the engagement process by leading meetings with their friends or neighbors. This technique can also be used to share project information with community leaders and train them to facilitate discussions with their own communities.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Inform stakeholders of the meeting in a box opportunity and gauge interest in hosting.
    - Consider holding optional training sessions with hosts to review materials and answer any questions.
    - Prepare materials using clear, simple and inclusive language. Suggested materials include:
        - A letter thanking the host that provides orientation about what the box contains and specifies how to send collected input to the City.
        - A sample invitation for the host to send to potential participants.
        - An overview of the project, including an explanation of how the input will be used.
        - A sign-in sheet to optionally collect participants' contact information to keep them updated on the project.
        - Instructions for the meeting host, note-taker and participants to follow.
        - A worksheet that outlines key discussion points and questions.
        - Participant satisfaction surveys to assess the effectiveness of the meeting and materials.
    - Distribute the materials with selected hosts or publish materials online.
- **After**
    - Compile, digitize and review collected input to inform decision-making. Upload any sign-ups for the project contact list.
    - Send a note of thanks to the meeting host expressing appreciation for their facilitation.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs will vary depending on how materials are shared. If mailing boxes, costs will depend on the size and number of boxes being sent. Other costs to consider include any participation support provided.
Time: Moderate	Preparation of materials may take a few weeks or more. A window of at least one month will be needed for hosts to conduct their meetings and send collected input to staff.
Capacity: Minimal	One or two staff can prepare meeting in a box materials, serve as a point of contact for hosts and digitize/analyze collected input.

How to make it more inclusive

- Consider providing participation support.
- Offer to provide materials in additional languages as needed.

Mobile Engagement

What is it?

Mobile engagement refers to bringing public participation directly to residents through traveling engagement centers, mobile outreach vehicles and other roving engagement efforts. These activities create flexible opportunities for public participation by meeting people where they live, work and gather. Mobile engagement moves between neighborhoods and public spaces, increasing visibility and accessibility.

When to use it

Mobile engagement can be an effective way to reach people that may face barriers to attending traditional public meetings or formal participation events. It can also be used to engage community members in projects requiring outreach across multiple locations.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Decide on the method of mobile engagement, such as traveling information booths or buses.
    - Conducting informal interviews with community members can help inform what they would want to see from the mobile engagement.
    - Options for acquiring outreach vehicles may include:
      - Repurposing existing vehicles.
        - New York City repurposed a retired Department of Corrections bus to create the People's Bus, transforming it into a mobile civic engagement hub.
      - Allocating grant or federal funding.
        - Raleigh, North Carolina, used American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to procure a mobile engagement van for community outreach and engagement.
  - Identify key locations to host mobile engagement.
    - Consider areas where intended audiences naturally congregate and high-traffic areas such as transit hubs, schools, libraries and workplaces.
    - If possible, hold mobile engagements during community events to reach diverse audiences.
  - Consider the amount of time the mobile engagement vehicle will be used. Costs will vary based on whether borrowing a vehicle for short-term use or investing long-term.
    - Short-term use may primarily involve staff time, fuel, outreach and engagement materials and temporary branding (e.g., banners or decals).
    - A long-term investment requires additional funding for vehicle purchase, registration, insurance, maintenance, storage and branding. Assess the intended use and operational needs to determine the most cost-effective approach.

  - Conduct outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may be particularly interested and able to help share the engagement opportunity.
  - Check weather conditions in advance of mobile engagement.
    - Remind team members to dress accordingly.
    - If temperatures at 80°F or higher are anticipated, ensure water and shade are available and/or consider postponing the mobile engagement.
  - Identify staff able to participate and support the mobile engagement. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.

- **During**
  - Keep interactions brief while allowing deeper discussions for those interested.
  - Staff should wear similar attire, such as a City-branded T-shirt.
  - Collect feedback through techniques such as interviews, surveys and/or voice-recorded input options.
    - If applicable, provide tablets for digital participation.
    - Provide an option for people to share contact information for ongoing project updates.
    - Clearly explain how input will inform decision-making.
  - Note any next steps or future opportunities for engagement.

- **After**
  - Digitize public input collected as needed to guide project decision-making. Upload any sign-ups for the project contact list.
  - Follow up with participants.

Cost: Moderate to High	Costs will vary depending on the mode of transportation and materials required. Ongoing maintenance for a bus requires a larger budget.
Time: Moderate to High	Mobile engagement can require several months for planning and community outreach before launch.
Capacity: Moderate to High	Three or more staff may be needed for planning, setup, engagement and analyzing input.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Consider hosting mobile engagements at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
- Ensure mobile engagement is fully accessible (e.g., wheelchair-accessible vehicles).
- Offer multiple ways for people to share their perspectives (verbally, in writing, etc.).

News Releases

What is it?
News releases are concise, one to three-page documents that include essential information about a particular project and are written specifically for use by members of the news media. News releases are a form of “earned media” in which a media outlet reviews the news release and can decide to publish the document verbatim or use it as background or inspiration for their news story.

When to use it
News releases are effective for public outreach and engagement when the purpose is to widely disseminate information to local media outlets’ audiences. Examples of information worth using news releases for are City projects launching, important draft documents available for public comment and Citywide public participation opportunities. Because of news releases’ high visibility, departments that have an assigned Public Information Officer must work with the Communications Department and department management throughout the process.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Collaborate with the department’s Public Information Officer/ Communications Department to determine any newsworthy releases, events or invitations. Consider how a news release could help further public outreach and engagement goals.
- **During**
  - If the Communications Department approves, provide necessary information to help draft the news release.
  - Identify visual elements to help news media tell the story. Every news release should have a photo or image to accompany the information.
- **After**
  - Consider other places that the information in the news release could be shared, such as the department’s newsletter, community newsletters or with community-based organizations who are interested in the topic and may be willing to share with their networks.
  - Consider having a spokesperson available to do interviews and answer follow up questions. The Communications Department can assist with preparing staff for interviews as needed.

Cost: Minimal	This technique is free, which is why it is considered "earned media." For paid media, please refer to the *Paid Advertising* section.
Time: Moderate	News releases are relatively quick to produce, unless the subject matter is overly complex, but they often require sufficient time for management review and approval.
Capacity: Minimal	The Communications Department drafts, coordinates and distributes news releases for Mayoral Departments. A project manager in another department supporting the development of a news release should not have to spend significant additional time since they should already have most required information readily available.

Other considerations

- Select a release date. The department's Public Information Officer and department management can select a release date that considers the political and social climate.
- News releases are not guaranteed to be picked up by media outlets.
  - High-visibility or controversial initiatives are more likely to be shared in the media.

How to make it more inclusive

- Calls to action, which are messages that encourage community members to take a specific action, within the news release should be reasonable and achievable. Examples of calls to action may include "take this survey" or "attend the upcoming workshop".
- Include diverse voices within the news release, such as the experts or leaders invited to provide a quote.
- If contact information is included, include a phone number along with a website or email address. Some community members prefer phone communication or don't have access to email.

Newsletters

What is it?

Newsletters inform the public about news, updates and public participation opportunities. They are typically sent to a subscribed contact list on an ongoing basis. Newsletters can foster transparency and serve as a regular means of communication with the public.

When to use it

Newsletters are an outreach technique best used for projects that are expected to span several months and will contain important information relevant to the public, or for an entire department. For example, the City Planning Department has a bimonthly newsletter updating the public on all current projects. The Economic Development Department has a project-specific newsletter for the San Diego Promise Zone to highlight business activity and resources or opportunities for community members and organizations within the Promise Zone.

A comprehensive list of newsletters for various elected officials, departments and programs can be found on the City's Connect page.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - City staff typically use platforms like Constant Contact, SalesMate, GovDelivery, Indigov and/or MailChimp to manage their format, content and distribution.
  - Create a standard newsletter template for the project.
    - Newsletter templates should follow the City's Style Guide.
  - Increase newsletter visibility by sharing sign-up links via social media and outreach materials, through other relevant newsletters and by embedding a sign-up option on the project's webpage.
  - Identify a realistic and consistent newsletter publication schedule (e.g. monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly) to maintain a consistent cadence.
- **During**
  - Draft newsletter content, such as significant milestones, what is coming up, how the public can get involved and positive news, such as projects receiving awards.
    - Keep text concise and use clear, simple and inclusive language so that people stay engaged.
    - Include a photo/graphic for each newsletter update, if possible.
    - Newsletter content should follow the City's Writing Style Guide.
  - If there are any opportunities for public engagement associated with the project, include a clear call to action.

  - For departments with an assigned Public Information Officer, the Public Information Officer can review for AP Style and check for clarity, grammar and conciseness.
  - Send the newsletter from a City group email account with a clear and concise subject line.
- **After**
  - Review open and click-through rates to inform future email development.
  - Link published newsletters on the relevant department or project webpage for public awareness and consider sharing it with the relevant media contact to maximize reach.

Cost: Moderate	There may be moderate costs to establish newsletter creation and distribution management platforms. Costs will depend on the number of newsletter contacts, users and more.
Time: Moderate	Preparing a newsletter may take up to a few weeks to write content and configure into the newsletter template. Time should also be allocated for Communications Department review before being published.
Capacity: Minimal	One team member can serve as the lead on newsletters to ensure inclusion of all relevant content and manage distribution. This person should also track newsletter success/open rate.

Other considerations

- All newsletter content should be viewable within the email itself if possible; avoid PDF attachments.
- Make it easy for people to opt out or unsubscribe from the newsletter.
- Post newsletters on a City webpage for archive purposes and community members seeking that information.

How to make it more inclusive

- Consider translating the newsletter into any languages needed for the intended audience.
- Follow document accessibility best practices.
- Incorporate images of diverse groups of people and locations. Photos of neighborhoods and communities work well, depending on the content and audience. Use images that are representative of the project area.

Open Houses

What is it?

Open houses are events where community members attend at their convenience to learn about projects and provide feedback. They use stations and displays to allow for self-paced interactions between community members and staff.

When to use it

The open house format is well-suited when the primary goal is to inform the community about upcoming projects, seek preliminary input or provide updates on project progress. Open house events can also help build rapport between staff and community members by creating opportunities for informal interactions.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Identify key objectives for the event.
  - Choose a location that can provide a steady flow of visitors and is spacious enough to allow for multiple displays, stations and points of engagement.
    - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
  - Create a logistics plan for the open house.
    - Plan the open house layout, with considerations for which open house stations will allow for participant input or learning about different topics. The goal should be to create an easy-to-follow and logical progression of activities.
    - Designate staff roles such as welcomers, note-takers and staff at each station. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
  - Allow time for the development, design and printing of materials.
    - Displays such as posters, handouts and maps should be developed with a consistent visual approach and provide the essential information using clear and simple language.
  - Conduct outreach to encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may be particularly interested in the topic.

  - Tour the venue in advance and coordinate with all staff involved to review the logistics plan and anticipate participant questions.

- **During**
  - Provide a sign-in sheet to collect names and optional contact information of attendees to share project updates.
  - After welcoming them, orient attendees to how the flow of the event will work, including what they can expect at each station and the various ways to provide input.
  - To engage attendees and encourage feedback, include interactive elements such as project models, demonstrations or vision walls. Include independent activities for participants who enjoy engaging at their own pace.

- **After**
  - Compile, digitize and review collected input to inform decision-making. Upload any sign-ups for the project contact list.

Cost: Minimal	Costs can include any printed/display materials, participation support and venue rental fees.
Time: Moderate	Planning an open house typically takes at least two months.
Capacity: High	A full team is needed to support an open house to help plan, staff the different stations and provide logistical support.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Play background music that suits the environment and cultural context.
- Consider hosting meetings at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.

Participation Support

Subject to budget availability and the nature of the project, the City may provide engagement participants support in the form of prizes, meals and/or childcare to reduce participation barriers such as the cost of transportation, meals and time. The City conducted a non-statistically valid survey to assess public preferences for engagement and found respondents identified transportation support (29.1%), food provision (25%) and childcare (16.2%) as important resources for increasing accessibility. These strategies can help make participation more feasible and accessible for more people, especially people who are unable to prioritize engaging with the City. Implementing these strategies can increase the diversity and quality of participation from the public.

Consult with management to understand if participation support is appropriate and whether the project budget can accommodate these strategies.

Participation support options

Participation support options can help offset participant costs, encourage participation and acknowledge community members' contributions to a project. Gift cards are one preferred way to reduce barriers to participation. Gift cards are versatile and allow participants to use them according to their own needs. Prior to an engagement activity, staff should establish qualification criteria and prepare an appropriate amount of gift cards for the activity. Distribute gift cards at the end of a participation activity to encourage full participation. If staff are mailing out gift cards, use a service that requires signature upon delivery or electronic delivery.

Table 12 Participation Support Option Recommendations

Public's Role	Examples	Recommended Value
Short duration participation (0-1 hour)	Interactions at pop-up events, filling out comment forms and short surveys.	$0, or promotional item
Medium duration participation (1.5-3 hours)	Participation in open houses, workshops, public meetings, focus groups or completing longer surveys.	$0-$20
Long-duration participation (3-5 hours)	Participation in design-focused workshops or field trips.	$0-$50
All-day participation	Participation in an all-day activity to learn or engage	$50-$150
Review and advise	Participant reviews engagement materials and presents recommendations to City staff.	$40-$60

If giving away participation support options or promotional items is regularly expected for engagement activities, staff should set up an engagement inventory and check-out system.

Members of the public must report the gift cards that they receive as taxable income, per the Internal Revenue Code. Annual amounts less than $600 are required to be self-reported and annual amounts over $600 need to be reported to the IRS on Form 1099-MISC by the City.

When distributing gift cards, staff should be aware of any large amounts being distributed and include a written notification of gift card regulations to participants, using the following statement: “Please note that cash or cash equivalent amounts to a single recipient that exceed $600 annually will be reported to the Internal Revenue Service on IRS Form 1099-MISC by the City of San Diego. For recipients receiving over $600 annually, the City must collect recipients’ name, address, Social Security or Taxpayer Identification number and amount earned for Form 1099-MISC reporting. The IRS has stipulated that amounts less than $600 are required to be self-reported by the recipient on their personal tax return. Please consult with your personal tax advisor for any questions or concerns.”

Transportation

Some other ways to provide participation support include providing transportation passes or parking validation. The San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) offer one-day passes that can cover Trolley, COASTER or bus fares to and from engagement events. Staff can also inform participants of MTS's paratransit service, MTS Access. This service is for people with disabilities who may not be able to use the fixed service routes. Through providing transit passes, people who use public transit can more easily reach engagement event venues.

If an engagement event is held at a site with paid parking, consider providing parking validations.

Prizes

Prizes can also help encourage public participation. Prizes often take the form of promotional items, which can be given to an attendee for participation or winning a game. Games should be project-related and may include spin-the-wheel, random drawings, board games and art competitions.

Promotional items are typically low-cost City-branded items that are appealing or useful to participants. Staff may work with Publishing Services to produce high-quality graphics or designs for these items. Some examples include City-branded water bottles, tote bags or hats.

Staff should ensure that hybrid engagement formats provide equal chances for virtual and in-person participants to win prizes.

Per California law, the City is not allowed to implement games where gambling or admission fees are a factor.

Meals and refreshments

Meals and refreshments at City-led engagement events help support participant engagement and encourage the attendance of people who may otherwise be unable to participate due to needing to feed themselves or their family. Meals refer to a main dish of food while refreshments refer to light snacks and drinks. Examples of meals can include sandwiches, wraps, pasta dishes or salads. Examples of refreshments include water, coffee, juice, granola bars and fruit.

Determine in advance if there are any limitations on providing meals or refreshments in an event space or additional costs associated with booking the space if providing food. Staff should consider providing the option for participants to indicate any dietary restrictions during event registration. Choose meals and refreshments with consideration for participants' cultural or religious backgrounds in addition to dietary restrictions.

Meals and refreshments can vary depending on the event context. For example, pre-made, individual wraps for highly attended events enables participants to quickly get and neatly eat their food. Per the City's Administrative Regulation (AR) 35.80, environmentally preferable purchases and practices are encouraged. When possible, buy a little extra food than the number of expected attendees to accommodate for last-minute attendees and consider purchasing reasonably priced items from local small businesses. Label food items with ingredients such as pork, beef or common allergens when possible. For packaged food, keep the original box so people can view the ingredient list.

Another option is providing participants vouchers to purchase meals or refreshments from an on-site vendor – for example, if engaging at a sporting event, consider offering tickets to the snack bar.

If the event location allows for it, create a space for people to eat together in small groups and allocate about 20 minutes for eating and socializing.

Table 13 Meal and Refreshments Recommendations

Activity	Example	Recommendation
Short duration event (0-1 hour)	Pop-up event	**Refreshments**
Medium duration event (1.5-3 hours)	Public meetings or workshops	If the event falls during breakfast (8:00 – 10:00 a.m.)/ lunch (11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.)/ dinner (6:00 – 8:00 p.m.) **One Meal + Refreshments** If the meeting is outside of breakfast/lunch/dinner **Refreshments**
Long duration event (3-5 hours)	Design-focused workshop	If the event falls during breakfast/lunch/dinner **One or Two Meals + Refreshments** If the event is outside of breakfast/lunch/dinner **Refreshments**
All-day event	All-day tour, all-day training	**Two meals + Refreshments**

Childcare

Though an engagement event may be designed for all ages in mind, children under 10 may or may not take an interest in participating depending on their age and the engagement activity. Providing childcare can help participants who bring children to an in-person engagement event overcome participation barriers that arise from needing to look after children. Consider hiring licensed childcare professionals from community-based centers or childcare providers. Anyone providing childcare must be licensed or license-exempt, background-checked, and have tuberculosis clearance. Advertise in advance of the engagement event if childcare will be provided.

Childcare activities should be designed for a range of ages and abilities and can be adapted to engage around the project's topic, such as an age-appropriate handout or interactive map. There could also be a kids' table with a variety of alternative activities such as puzzles, board games, drawing/art materials or children's books. Objects with small or potentially hazardous parts for young children should be avoided.

Pop-up Events

What is it?

A pop-up event, sometimes known as “tabling,” is a temporary activity set up in a public or private space to engage the community in a specific activity or topic. These activities are typically short-term, ranging from an hour to a full day, and are designed to capture the attention of passersby. They can be standalone or incorporated as part of major community events or festivals.

When to use it

Pop-up events can create a sense of in-person community connection by meeting people where they are. Pop-ups can be particularly effective to raise awareness about a project or gather feedback from people who may not typically attend formal public engagement events or meetings.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Consider pop-up locations at high-traffic places or events where the intended audience naturally gathers or visits, such as sporting events, schools, plazas, shopping centers and community centers.
    - Consider partnering with other organizations to co-host a pop-up event. For example, if engaging on a City project that promotes community health, consider collaborating with a health organization’s pop-up medical screening event. This creates a trusted setting for engagement while recognizing that public engagement is secondary to the event’s primary purpose.
    - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
    - Obtain any necessary approvals if considering a pop-up on private property. Pop-ups of a large scale in the public right-of-way may require a special event permit.
    - Schedule pop-up events during times when people are likely to be out and about, such as lunch hours.
    - Create a logistics plan that outlines the roles, shift schedules, activities, outreach materials and supplies associated with the pop-up event.
        - Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
    - More complex engagement activities may warrant a flow diagram, which is a sketch of how the setup will be organized within the tent canopy/table area.
    - Staff should wear similar attire such as a City-branded T-shirt.
    - Prepare an optional sheet for interested passersby to sign up for ongoing notifications.

- **During**
    - Provide activities and materials that are interactive and engaging to draw people in. This could include quick and simple games or demonstrations.
    - Consider providing participation support.
    - If applicable, provide tablets for digital participation or printed surveys.
- **After**
    - Digitize/upload public input collected to guide project decision-making.
    - Follow up with participants as needed.

Cost: Minimal	Costs for pop-up events are typically low, including any printed materials, games and participation support.
Time: Minimal to Moderate	Staff can plan and deploy a pop-up event within a few weeks assuming that the department has access to a foldable table, chairs and tent canopy.
Capacity: Moderate	Three to four staff members is recommended in order to have the capacity to interact with larger crowds and support logistical needs.

Other considerations

- If joining a local event, coordinate with other City departments that might already be engaging about similar topics in this event.
- Check weather conditions in advance of the event.
    - Remind team members to dress accordingly.
    - If temperatures at 80°F or higher are anticipated, ensure water and shade are available and/or consider postponing the event.
- Ensure parking directions and instructions are provided for staff carrying materials, especially for loading and unloading.
- Always prioritize safety. When handling heavy items, seek assistance to avoid strain or injury.

How to make it more inclusive

- Choose locations or occasions that will offer opportunities to engage with people who are less likely to attend a public engagement event.
- Provide printed outreach material in all relevant languages for the intended audience.

Project Models

What is it?

Project models are three-dimensional representations that serve as tools to help the public visualize and interact with project concepts. They can come in the form of miniature objects representing buildings or public spaces, real-world installations of pilot projects or digital interactive models. Often, project models are scaled down to fit on a tabletop or small area but can also be built at full scale to make project concepts more realistic.

When to use it

Project models support hands-on collaboration and can help provide initial demonstrations of concepts. They can help participants visualize a project's scale, relationships between buildings and spaces and design elements. Project models can also foster creativity and collaboration when participants help build them using physical materials or digital tools. Models can also effectively demonstrate potential impacts and trade-offs.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Reflect on the ideal way for the public to engage with the project model to support public participation goals.
  - Select the desired model area and the scale at which it should be portrayed. The model should be visible and understandable for participants.
  - Consider what is around the project area, such as existing buildings and places or other upcoming projects. Provide context by showing the project model within its neighborhood/surroundings to give participants an idea of future changes.
  - Create an informal draft or virtual mockup of the project model to evaluate its scale and the area it will represent.
  - Determine whether participants can interact with the model, change its components, move pieces, or solely observe.
  - For physical models:
    - Plan how the model will be transported to the display location(s).
    - Identify dimensions, heights, and other required measurements.

  - Choose a digital platform if creating a virtual project model. These are computer-generated models that use technology to create detailed, interactive project representations. There are several ways to use technology for virtual project models:
    - **Rendering:** The process of finalizing digital images or 3D models with lighting, shadows and textures to visualize a project's outcome.
    - **Virtual Reality (VR) / Augmented Reality (AR):** Interactive technologies that immerse users in a virtual world (VR) or overlay digital content onto the real world (AR) using cameras, sensors and displays.
  - For participant-built models, prepare simple components like blocks, templates or pre-cut pieces.
  - Obtain any necessary approvals if considering a project model on private property. Project models of a large scale in the public right-of-way may require a special event permit.
- **During**
  - Provide any background materials using clear, simple and inclusive language and orient participants on how to engage with the model.
  - Assemble the model as needed using pre-determined dimensions and drafts.
  - Offer multiple ways for participants to share their perspectives such as through surveys or guided discussions.
  - Take pictures of the model for future reference.
- **After**
  - Compile, digitize and analyze public input to inform project decision-making.
  - Consider maintaining or updating the model as the project evolves.

Cost: Minimal to High	Cost can vary significantly depending on the size and scope of the model. While simpler models can be low-cost, more complex and detailed models can be considerably more expensive.
Time: Moderate to High	Smaller, simpler models can be produced in about one month, while intricate models with details may take up to one year. Models that demonstrate a 1:1 scale may require additional approvals and time to construct.
Capacity: Minimal to High	While simple models may take only one or two staff to support, more complex models may require a full team including designers, facilitators and technical experts.

Other considerations

- Project models can work well when combined with other engagement techniques such as pop-up events, workshops and TV/radio/podcast interviews.
- Colorful paint, movable furniture and temporary structures can be used for full scale models to show future changes to public spaces and create flexible areas for public engagement. For full scale models in the public right-of-way, contact the asset-managing department (the department that manages the specific type of asset such as Transportation, or Parks and Recreation, etc.) and determine if any permits are needed.

How to make it more inclusive

- Choose materials that are safe for handling. If a physical model is interactive, use non-toxic materials and avoid small pieces that could pose a hazard for children.
- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.

Project-specific Groups

What is it?

A project-specific group is a group composed of members of the public and selected by staff who have perspectives and knowledge to share. This technique can allow for more in-depth input for a specific project. These groups typically have 10 to 15 members and meet regularly on a temporary basis for a predetermined amount of time to review materials and provide input and ideas.

When to use it?

Project-specific groups can be most useful when deeper conversations are needed to explore a range of perspectives or when a project is controversial or complex. Members of the group bring expertise, experience or knowledge specific to the project and may represent stakeholders or communities affected by the project.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Determine the number of participants.
  - Consider the timeframe for the group to meet based on the project timeline. Typically, participants will meet at the beginning of a project and when information is available to be shared up until a decision is made or a stage of the project is completed. Choose a frequency for the group to meet, which can be regular or based around project milestones.
  - Consider who should be included in the group and identify a list of criteria to select participants and/or add new members as needed. An important criterion is the ability to attend group meetings. Applications can optionally be evaluated based on criteria such as geography (such as where applicants reside, work, or attend school), occupation, income or topics of interest and a double-blind coding approach can be used that anonymizes applications to avoid any biases when selecting members. Selection criteria based on race, gender, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin should not be used.
  - Be aware that if any member of the group will economically benefit or suffer economic detriment from any decision ultimately made about the item or project the group is advising on, they may have a conflict of interest. Those details will need to be analyzed individually. Guidance can be found on the City's Ethics Commission website.
  - Inform group members of their selection and optionally publish member selection results on the project webpage.
  - Identify a group facilitator. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.

   - Consider whether the meetings of the group will be open to the public and establish a clear approach for documentation.
      - Documentation could include notetaking, summary documents and/or recording meetings. Recording meetings can be beneficial for providing information to community members who cannot attend but can also prevent participants from sharing openly. Regardless of the method chosen, sharing information with the broader public about the group's input can build understanding and trust in the group's work and recommendations.
   - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
   - Meetings should be consistent and at the same time of day and day of week when possible. Coordinate with group members on their preferred meeting date and time.
- **During**
   - In the first meeting, share the productive engagement event guidelines or co-create engagement event agreements.
   - Consider surveying or polling participants at the first and last meetings of the project-specific group to understand changes in project-related sentiment over time, if any.
   - Share an agenda and any background materials with group members in advance of meetings.
   - Use a sign-in sheet or roll call to track member attendance at meetings.
   - Facilitate the meetings and document member input according to the established plan.
   - Upon completion of a project stage or at the final meeting, set aside some time to celebrate what has been accomplished.
      - Provide space for participants to reflect on their experience.
      - Staff can express appreciation for group members, note how their input has influenced the project and what the team will do with the input moving forward.
- **After**
   - In accordance with the documentation plan, consider publishing meeting summaries on the project webpage to improve transparency by sharing the key topics discussed and input themes.

Cost: Moderate	Costs will depend on any reimbursement provided to participants for meeting-related expenses (parking, transit, meals, etc.) and consultant support needed. Other costs may include printing materials and venue rentals.
Time: High	The planning and participant selection process may take a few months. Project-specific groups typically meet consistently for at least a few months.
Capacity: High	A team will be needed to help plan, recruit and select members and consistently support group meetings. Meeting roles may include facilitation, notetaking and other logistical support tasks.

Other considerations

- Consider any audiovisual needs (projector, microphones, screen, etc.) for meetings. Bring extra extension cords in case electrical outlets are difficult to reach.
- Provide opportunities for participants to review any meeting summaries to verify that the recorded feedback includes what was shared.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance.
- Offer multiple ways for members to share their perspectives (verbally, in writing, through hands-on activities, etc.)

Public Meetings

What is it?

In-person public meetings are opportunities for the City to inform the public on a particular project and receive feedback. They can be used to present information, seek input on specific questions or decisions, and provide status reports or updates to the community.

When to use it?

Public meetings provide information about a project that may have impacts or be of interest to community members. Public meetings work well for projects at the inform, consult or involve levels and for less controversial projects. Some examples of City projects where public meetings would be appropriate could include involving the public in developing goals for a plan to address climate change impacts, soliciting feedback on design options to upgrade a neighborhood park or providing information about new programs coming to local libraries.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Clearly identify the type of information to be shared and/or the type of input being requested from the public.
  - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
    - Library meeting rooms or recreation centers may be good options.
  - Identify any activities that would be appropriate to incorporate into the meeting. Public meetings may be able to incorporate other engagement techniques, such as vision walls, comment cards or conversations between participants that encourage connection.
    - Develop a meeting agenda, including the start and end time to help set expectations.
  - Consider what roles are needed, such as facilitators and notetakers. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
    - Consider including staff with connections, lived experiences or historical knowledge of the community. Additionally, consider including those with institutional knowledge of the project and background on broader topics related to the City's work in the community.

- Conduct pre-meeting outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - Consider if outreach materials should be translated based on the intended audience.
    - Consider asking people to register for the meeting to provide a sense of the number and interests of attendees.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and groups that may be particularly interested in the topic.
- Prepare informational materials with enough time for internal review.
    - Boards and posters can be effective in smaller meetings where a less formal tone might be effective.
    - PowerPoint slides are effective in larger settings and for sharing substantial amounts of information. Consider printing digital materials like PowerPoint slides for the public's reference.
    - Follow document accessibility best practices.
- Schedule and conduct practice session(s) at least one week before the meeting to review the agenda, roles and anticipate attendees' questions.
- Arrive to the meeting venue early for any necessary set-up.

- **During**
    - Welcome attendees. Build in some extra time for arrival at the beginning of the meeting.
    - Provide a sign-in sheet to collect names and optional contact information of attendees to share project updates.
    - Share the productive engagement event guidelines, facilitate the meeting and thank those attending.
    - Document input received.
    - Note any next steps or future opportunities for engagement.
    - Optionally allow participants to share feedback about the engagement event through participant satisfaction surveys.
- **After**
    - Meeting summaries can be developed to share with attendees and the broader public.
    - Follow up with answers to any questions that came up during the meeting.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Expenses may be minimal as City facilities are available for hosting meetings for free or a small rental fee. Costs will vary depending on materials developed, participation support provided and any consultant support.
Time: Moderate	Planning effective public meetings usually takes at least one month. Meetings themselves do not usually exceed two hours.
Capacity: Moderate to High	A team of up to five may be needed to fulfill all the roles for meeting preparation and implementation (including sign-in, facilitator, presenter, notetaker).

Other considerations

- Consider the audiovisual needs (projector, microphones, screen, etc.) of the meeting and size of the meeting space. If the project team is giving a presentation, a projector and screen will be needed. In general, if the meeting has more than 12 participants and is conducted in a space larger than a conference room, use microphones so that people with hearing limitations can still fully participate. Bring extra extension cords in case electrical outlets are difficult to reach.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Consider hosting meetings at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
- Consider making the meeting hybrid and recording it to accommodate more people.
- If asking for input, offer multiple ways for people to share their perspectives (verbally, writing on comment cards or boards, and/or sharing in small groups).

Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

What is it?

Public service announcements (PSAs) are short messages that share important information in an audio or video format. PSAs are either 30 seconds, one minute or one minute and 30 seconds. They are clear and easy-to-understand messages that can be posted online or shared with news outlets for broadcast as official messages to the public. PSAs may look similar to commercials but are not selling something — rather, they share information, communicate opportunities for public participation, or publicize calls to action.

When to use it

PSAs can be used when sharing brief and targeted information, especially when requesting citywide action. For example, during the rainy season, the City may release a PSA to inform community members about how to prevent stormwater runoff and keep the oceans clean. This example meets the requirements of urgency, broad audience and importance. PSAs are best used for necessary messages as opposed to everyday information. It is helpful for the subject to be visual to capture the viewers' attention.

How to do it

Consult with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department before beginning any work relevant to the PSA.

- **Before**
  - Understand the target audience and their framing of the issue. It can be helpful to consult with people who are the focus of the PSA during the planning process to learn what message would be most impactful to them.
  - Create a goal for the PSA – what is it trying to accomplish or inspire? A PSA must have a hook that grabs the viewers' attention and an intentional message and should use clear, simple, and inclusive language.
    - Evaluate the best platform to reach the target audience. Determine whether a cost will be involved in purchasing airtime, and the best method for sharing the PSA with external audiences.
  - There may be time constraints based on the platform where the audio or video message will be broadcast.
  - Consider how long the PSA should run based on the information being shared. It could be a couple weeks, one month or longer.

- **During**
  - Work with the department's Public information Officer, the Communications Department to submit PSA scripts that meet the specified requirements of media outlets.
    - For example, certain news stations may have format requirements for video submissions, such as specific file formats, frame rates and resolutions.
- **After**
  - Work with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department to evaluate the success of the PSA (such as views and clicks) and discuss any changes that should be made for future PSAs.

Cost: Minimal	Television channels and radio stations may broadcast PSAs for free, so the only cost is production. The City's Communications Department can provide these services to other departments at staff cost.
Time: Moderate	Public service announcements may take several weeks to write, film or record and share with the media.
Capacity: Moderate	The Communications Department should assist in creating the PSA. There should be key staff from the requesting department able to assist with script and content development.

How to make it more inclusive

- Make sure captions are available for videos.
- It is highly recommended that a PSA be broadcast in both English and Spanish. Additional languages may be requested based on the content and intended audience.
- Select a platform(s) with a broad and diverse audience and reach.

Social Media

What is it?

As of the development of this guide, the City is active on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, Threads, X and YouTube social media platforms. Social media is digital technology used for multimedia information sharing, receiving information and participating in online discussions. The social media landscape is ever-changing and requires careful oversight and training prior to use. Social media content may include videos, text, photos, graphics and audio, and it may vary by platform. Under the City's Social Media Administrative Regulation (AR) 90.61 and Social Media Policy, authorized users can access and contribute to these platforms, in addition to approved department accounts on various platforms.

When to use it

Social media is suitable for informing community members about upcoming projects, but it is important to remember that not every project or announcement will be appropriate for these platforms. Decisions should be made based on the intended audience and demographics. Social media is an effective way to augment other communications tools and platforms. Through social media, both government officials and community members can engage in open dialogue. Additionally, social media posts can provide adequate and timely notice about public engagement opportunities or updates on project progress. The digital nature of social media posts also lends well to hyperlinking to provide additional context or direct users to an online survey.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - *For departments with their own approved social media accounts*[11]:
    - Decide what information and call to action the social media campaign will share.
    - Formulate a message and identify the number of posts needed.
      - Write text copy that incorporates the critical message for the desired number of posts. All writing should be concise and limit jargon, and text should convey a consistent and personal tone while leading with the most important information. Minimize text on graphics.
    - Prioritize quality of the content over quantity. Considerations should be given to best practices on developing content that is engaging for the individual platform (Instagram versus X, for example.)

[11] These departments include Office of Boards and Commissions, Office of the City Auditor, Office of the City Clerk, Office of the Independent Budget Analyst, Environmental Services Department, Fire-Rescue Department, Parks and Recreation Department, Public Library, Public Utilities Department, and Purchasing & Contracting Department.

            - Images should be saved at a minimum density of 72 pixels per inch (ppi), provided they are created at or above their intended display size so that the file is small and easy to share.
        - Allocate funds necessary to promote posts as needed.
    - *For departments without their own social media accounts*:
        - Gather images or video, text copy for the post, and resource link and submit a request to the Communications Department or directly to the department's Public Information Officer upon approval from management. Contact the department's Public Information Officer if there are any questions about the process. The Communications Department's social media team may edit submissions to meet platform requirements and improve engagement.
        - Allocate funds necessary to promote posts as needed.
- **During**
    - Monitor reception of the social media post(s) or work with the department Public Information Officer to monitor results.
    - Track the public's concerns and questions regarding the project and form the appropriate response as needed.
- **After**
    - *For departments with their own social media accounts:*
        - After the social media post lapses, review all public input and discussions.
        - Keep social media users informed about project progress and upcoming ways to engage through social media or other forms of information sharing.
        - Download an impressions report of all social media posts associated with the project. This information is useful for developing project engagement summaries.
    - *For departments without their own social media accounts:*
        - Work with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department to get an impressions report of all social media posts associated with the project. This information is useful for developing project engagement summaries.

Cost: Minimal	Typical social media posts are free, but advertisement posts or boosted posts could range in cost.
Time: Minimal to Moderate	Depending on the type of social media post, it may take a few weeks up to a few months to plan, create and post a social media post. For instance, a video post would take longer for production than a simple photo.
Capacity: Moderate	For typical social media posts, three to four staff are needed to create or gather graphics, photos and videos.

Other considerations

- Social media is constantly evolving with new trends and preferred media formats. Some platforms lend better to different post formats. For instance, YouTube may be better for long-form horizontal videos and Instagram may be best for short-form vertical videos. Incorporating a recent trend and choosing the appropriate format for a post may increase visibility and engagement with the post.

How to make it more inclusive

- The City's social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Nextdoor, Threads, X and YouTube have different user demographics. Work with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department to select the most appropriate platform. New platforms may be considered and reviewed for approval by the Communications Department under Administrative Regulation (AR) 90.61.
- In all posts, use clear, simple and inclusive language.
- Add an image description to the body of the caption to help people using screen readers receive the correct message.
- If the post is a photo or includes graphics, include alternative text for people using screen readers, and use document accessibility best practices.
- When posting a video to social media, add closed captions when there is dialogue. If there are clips with strobing lights, add warnings for people with photo-sensitivities.
- Incorporate images and graphics of diverse groups of people.
- Provide messaging in multiple languages.

Surveys and Polls

What is it?
Surveys and polls can solicit and assess the public's opinions regarding projects. Both techniques should use clear and unbiased questions to prompt responses from the public through online or in-person formats.

Polls consist of a single question or a short set of questions that provide surface-level insight into public sentiment. Surveys are longer and more detailed than polls, giving more in-depth insight into public perception. Both can be formal or informal and made statistically significant and representative.

When to use it
Surveys and polls can be used to gather public input at any time during the public engagement process to assess sentiment from large amounts of people. Repeated surveying or polling can be useful to understand changes in perception over time.

Polls can be used to determine people's preferences between pre-established options while surveys are used to assess how people prioritize proposed options, evaluate performance or understand an idea. Results from surveys can help staff understand how people are impacted by projects and inspire new ideas for decision-makers.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Define key problems and questions that survey or poll results will answer.
    - Determine the audience and what the timeline is for soliciting responses. Surveys are typically open for at least one month. Identify any translation needed for the survey or poll audience in advance.
    - Assess early on whether results would have significant weight in the decision-making process. If interested in generating statistically significant surveys or polls (in which the results are likely to be true for the larger population), work with the City's Performance & Analytics Department. Otherwise, the surveys or polls should not be regarded as statistically significant or representative. Draft an introduction that explains the context and purpose of the survey or poll, including how the data will be used.
    - Reference the Survey Standards and Practices Policy to write unbiased, non-leading questions using clear, simple and inclusive language.
        - Surveys should have no more than 15 questions; less is better. The more questions they encounter, the less likely people are to complete the survey.
        - Questions should have a logical flow, moving from general questions to more specific ones and grouping similar items together.

- Each question should have a clear purpose. Define what actions would be taken based on responses.
- Avoid leading questions.
    - For example, the question, "Do you want to see more trees in your neighborhood?", which has a yes or no answer, leads the respondent to a desired answer. The question should instead ask, ""*How do you feel about the number of trees in your neighborhood?*" Response options could include:
        - I would like to see more trees
        - The current number of trees is fine
        - I would like to see fewer trees
- Questions should be closed-ended to invite focused, applicable answers.
    - For example, the question, "Tell us everything you think about the proposed park," is open-ended. The question could instead state, "What is your main concern about the proposed park?" or "What feature is most important to you in the proposed park." A list of options can accompany closed-ended questions to provide focused answers.
- Consider if a survey needs demographic questions. Demographic questions should always be voluntary, are usually included at the end and have an accompanying introduction to explain their purpose. If demographic questions are included, add the following disclaimer where appropriate.
    - "The City collects demographic information to better serve all San Diegans. Data shows some groups have not benefited equally from City of San Diego services. By asking these questions, we can see who we are reaching, who we may be missing, and measure progress toward creating participation opportunities for everyone."
    - See Performance & Analytics' Standard Demographic Questions for more information.
- Create proper formats for responses.
    - Circular radio buttons are best when a question warrants a single answer and check boxes are best for questions with multiple answers.
    - Include an open field with enough characters for "Other" answers for respondents to provide a meaningful answer.

- Share the survey/poll with the Performance & Analytics Department for review. Also, consider testing with staff not directly involved in the project to check for any biases.
- Draft a conclusion that acknowledges respondents' efforts, provides links to applicable privacy policies and outlines follow-up actions such as where results will be available and how people can stay engaged in the project.
- Consider providing participation support for longer surveys to increase response rates and reach people who are less likely to respond.
- Work with the Performance & Analytics Department to choose and prepare the poll or survey platform. Medallia is the recommended platform because it offers robust data security and allows for consistent data management. Departments can work with Performance & Analytics to prepare surveys or polls in Medallia. See Survey Platforms below for additional platform recommendations.

- **During**
  - After survey or poll launch, share it through techniques such as social media, the project webpage, flyers and at pop-up events.
    - In communications, include how the City will use the results and share the survey or poll's close date.
    - Consider directly contacting organizations and groups that may be particularly interested in the topic.
  - Monitor response demographics and encourage participation from stakeholders to best achieve responses that are representative of the community.
- **After**
  - After the survey or poll closes, compile and analyze the data for decision-makers; request support from the Performance & Analytics Department for this as needed.
  - Consider sharing survey results with the public.

Visual preference surveys

Visual preference surveys are a type of survey that showcase various project options via graphics/images so that participants can indicate their preferred choices. They have clear input prompts that communicate project options to participants. Visual preference surveys can be used with other outreach and engagement techniques like open houses, web-based meetings or workshops.

In addition to survey and poll considerations, consider the following for visual preference surveys:

- **Before**
    - Options for implementing visual preference surveys include virtual platforms, using large-scale format printed boards during in-person meetings or designing booklets for participants to fill.
    - Image options should be uniformly sized and have similar composition, color saturation levels and pixel resolution.
    - Use realistic imagery, ideally taken at an eye level (e.g., photographs from real projects/products). Avoid computer generated images (CGI) or artificial intelligence (AI)-generated imagery.
    - Leave space next to each image for people to put stickers.
- **During**
    - Staff should explain the process for the visual preference survey and what the images represent.
        - Instruct participants not to cover the pictures with their stickers.
        - Inform participants that it is an individual exercise meant to solicit their own thoughts as opposed to a group discussion.
    - Give each participant a set number of stickers based on input needed. For example, when evaluating 10 project options, provide five green stickers for top choices and five blue stickers for second choices.
- **After**
    - Collect all visual preference surveys and digitize them as needed.

Cost: Minimal	Surveys or polls have minimal hard costs because the City maintains access to surveying and polling software such as Medallia. Implementing visual preference surveys at in-person events may involve minimal expenses related to large-format prints or booklets.
Time: Moderate	Conducting surveys and polls requires up to two months for creation, testing and public outreach efforts. Surveys and polls are typically open for one month.
Capacity: Minimal	One or two staff members are needed to develop and conduct surveys or polls.

Other considerations

- Surveys or polls capture public input at a specific moment in time.

How to make it more inclusive

- Follow document accessibility best practices.
- Consider testing surveys and polls for compatibility across different devices.

Survey platforms

Surveys or polls conducted by the City will be administered through Medallia whenever possible. The Performance & Analytics Department can support other departments with creating these in Medallia. Medallia offers robust data security and is especially suitable for surveys that collect sensitive information. Recurring surveys should always be conducted using Medallia to ensure consistent data management and security. Medallia securely stores all survey data within the platform, though data can be exported to staff as needed for further analysis or reporting.

For one-off surveys, other tools such as Typeform, Microsoft Forms, Survey123 and Google Sheets may be used. These platforms provide flexibility for less sensitive surveys or those that do not require the enhanced security features of Medallia. The Performance & Analytics Department can guide staff in selecting the appropriate platform based on the survey's specific goals, frequency and data security needs.

Tours and Field Trips

What is it?

Tours and field trips involve visiting a location to get a first-hand experience of a project site. Subject matter experts or guides typically lead tours and field trips to provide context and facilitate learning and input. These activities can increase awareness about a topic or explore sites and surrounding communities for future projects.

When to use it?

Tours and field trips can be effective immediately following project kick-off to familiarize stakeholders with a particular location or site. They can also be used to gather input and understand perceptions and challenges about buildings and infrastructure. Tours and field trips can also show project progress or display a project with very similar characteristics to the one proposed.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Identify a tour/field trip location based on objectives. Gather information about the location's hours of operation, tour options, educational programs, security and any special permission requirements or restrictions.
    - If feasible, perform a site visit prior to the tour/field trip to assess any conditions that may warrant additional accommodations or safety measures.
  - Determine the tour/field trip date, time, guide(s) and invited participants.
    - Invite participants using a registration link to collect contact information and cap the number of participants as needed.
    - Choose a time when the location is active. For example, if the tour is to learn more about the location's physical characteristics there may be times that are better suited to see those in action.
  - Consider preparing a microphone and speaker or other form of voice amplification for the tour guide to ensure participants can hear.
  - Consider arranging transportation to and from the destination.
    - Consider factors such as distance, travel time, parking and accessibility. If using buses or other transportation services, make reservations well in advance.
  - Identify staff able to participate and support the tour/field trip. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
  - Create and share a detailed itinerary that outlines the logistics of the tour/field trip at least two weeks in advance.

        - Include information such as departure and arrival times, transportation and/or parking information, scheduled activities, maps, meal arrangements and safety procedures.
    - Distribute and collect liability waiver and photo release forms signed by tour/field trip participants.
        - This can be done electronically via email prior to the tour/field trip and/or in person via printed copies prior to boarding City-arranged transportation or at the beginning of the tour.
- **During**
    - If collecting input is part of the objective, supply participants with clipboards, pens and comment forms for recording observations.
    - The tour/field trip leader should wear City-branded clothing or be otherwise easily identifiable.
- **After**
    - Collect input from participants' comment forms and digitize as needed to inform project decisions.
    - Note any future opportunities for engagement and/or share how input will impact decision-making.
    - Consider distributing participant satisfaction surveys to learn how participants felt the tour/field trip went and make improvements for the future.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	Costs depend on any fees assessed at the location, for the tour guide, participation support, and transportation.
Time: Moderate	Planning and setting up the tour/field trip can take a month or longer. The tour/field trip itself may last an hour or more.
Capacity: Minimal	Tours/field trips typically require at least two staff members to plan and execute.

How to make it more inclusive

- Consider any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Choose a location that is fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues that are near transit and that have adequate parking.
- Check weather conditions in advance of the tour/field trip if it will occur outdoors.
    - Remind team members to dress accordingly.
    - If temperatures at 80°F or higher are anticipated, ensure water and shade are available and/or consider postponing the tour/field trip.
- Consider the time when planning a tour/field trip.
    - If participants are attending as part of their jobs, work day hours are preferred. If participants are attending on their own time, consider conducting it in the evening or on a weekend.

TV/Radio/Podcast Interviews

What is it?

The City is often featured in media interviews. In a media interview, a City employee with significant knowledge about a given subject will go on radio, television (TV) or internet streaming to answer questions asked by a news reporter, podcast host or other on-air personality and share information about a City project. Note that interviews can be pre-recorded or live. Pre-recorded interviews tend to be longer segments, which are later edited, while live interviews are typically shorter.

When to use it

TV or radio interviews, along with podcasts and social media platform content, can help inform community members about City projects that may already have an element of public interest and/or invite the broader public to participate in upcoming public engagement events. TV interviews and social media videos can help the City connect with viewers and listeners by focusing on the people behind the project or program, and by visually displaying the significance of projects that may be harder to explain through text or voice alone. If a news or media station or show host requests an interview, or there is an interest in featuring a City project in a media interview, it is critical to first consult the department's Public Information Officer or the Communications Department.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - The City has an established process for participating in TV, radio or podcast interviews for departments with an assigned Public Information Officer. Departments should coordinate with their Public Information Officer.
    - The department's Public Information Officer can help to identify logistics, including the time, location and format.
    - The department's Public Information Officer can assist the coordination between the department and the media outlet.
    - The department's Public Information Officer can assist with facilitating the interview and address any follow-up.
  - In preparation for an interview, staff should:
    - Prepare key messages, including what the project is about, its importance to the public and whether the public should take any action(s).
    - Set time aside for interview practice.

- **During**
    - Tips for in-person interviews include:
        - Maintain eye contact with the reporter, not the camera.
        - Avoid jargon and acronyms and speak in plain and clear language.
        - Stand or sit still with a smile when appropriate.
        - Dress professionally in solid colors.
    - Best practices for virtual interviews:
        - Test the computer and audio in advance.
        - Adjust the camera to be centered and at eye level.
        - Clear the background of anything distracting. Consider using a City-issued virtual background.
        - Adjust lighting and consider facing a window for optimal conditions.
- **After**
    - The department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department can help address any follow-up.
    - In coordination with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department, consider sharing snippets of interviews on social media to reach a larger audience, with links to the original story for the public to easily find more information.

Cost: Minimal	There is no cost to this technique, which is why it is considered "earned media." For paid media, please reference the *Paid Advertising* section
Time: Minimal	Preparing for interviews can take anywhere from one day to several weeks. The department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department can help staff prepare for the interview as needed. The interview itself can take a few minutes up to several hours depending on the format.
Capacity: Moderate	Interviews may involve several members of a team, as well as the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department.

Other considerations

- Do not speak "off the record" – assume everything is being recorded and can be shared publicly.
- Take a breath before answering to create calm and have time to formulate an answer.

How to make it more inclusive

Some inclusionary efforts may need to be joint efforts with the news outlet conducting the interview and may be handled by the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department.

- Request a transcript, closed captioning and translation options for audible and visual accessibility.
- Consider participating in other language interviews with media outlets that provide news and information for different linguistic groups.
- Calls to action shared during the interview should be reasonable, achievable asks for any community member.

Vision Walls

What is it?

Vision walls are collaborative physical or digital displays on which participants provide input by writing, drawing or posting notes and images. Vision walls can facilitate creative input and make the engagement processes more transparent by allowing participants to view each other's feedback.

When to use it

Vision walls are most effective during the early stages of a project for soliciting a broad range of community input. They may also be integrated as an activity within techniques like workshops, open houses or pop-up events to capture the public's attention and encourage spontaneous engagement.

How to do it

- **Before**
  - Clearly define what kind of input is desired and how it will be used in the project.
  - Decide whether the vision wall will be physical or digital.
    - For physical vision walls:
      - Choose a surface that would be appropriate for the activity, such as a whiteboard, posterboard or large sheet of paper.
      - Consider size/dimensions so that the vision wall is eye-catching, provides enough space for input and fits in the area it will be displayed.
  - Create a visually appealing design that encourages engagement.
    - Include prompts or questions to guide input using clear, simple and inclusive language.
    - Leave enough space for multiple contributions.
  - Gather materials such as markers, sticky notes, stickers and other creative supplies for people to provide input on physical walls. For digital walls, set up the platform and test its functionality.
  - Identify high-traffic areas or events where the vision wall can be most visible.
    - Obtain any necessary approvals if considering a vision wall on private property. Vision walls of a large scale in the public right-of-way may require a special event permit.
- **During**
  - Set up the vision wall at the identified location.
  - Describe its purpose to participants and explain how input will be used.
  - Provide participants ample time to visit each wall and post their input.

- **After**
  - Take pictures of the vision wall and/or digitize the input. Analyze common themes to inform project decision-making.
  - Consider displaying vision wall contributions on the project's webpage / in an engagement summary.

Cost: Minimal	Physical walls may require minimal material costs like posters, markers and display boards. There are free digital wall platforms but some may involve platform setup and maintenance fees.
Time: Minimal	Planning, designing and setting up a vision wall can take up to a couple of weeks, depending on complexity.
Capacity: Minimal	One to two staff can implement an effective vision wall.

How to make it more inclusive

- Identify any language access needs in advance.
- Design physical vision walls that consider people's varying heights and reach, including those using wheelchairs. For digital walls, choose a platform that is user-friendly and compatible with assistive technologies.
- Offer to post input on the wall for the participants if they feel more comfortable verbalizing their input as opposed to writing/drawing.

Web-based/Hybrid Meetings

What is it?
Web-based meetings are virtual gatherings that allow participants to interact online in real-time, regardless of physical location. They can include audio, video, screen sharing, chat functions, break-out rooms, polling and other interactive features to facilitate remote participation and engage attendees.

Hybrid meetings combine in-person participation with web-based meetings, offering attendees the flexibility to join in a manner that suits their needs. Hybrid meetings accommodate people who may face barriers to in-person attendance while maintaining the interactive benefits of in-person discussions.

When to use it?
Web-based or hybrid meetings are an ideal way to engage with the public when in-person meetings or workshops are not feasible and/or the convenience and accessibility of being able to participate from anywhere supports stakeholder participation. They are helpful for projects that require input from people across different locations.

How to do it

Web-based meetings

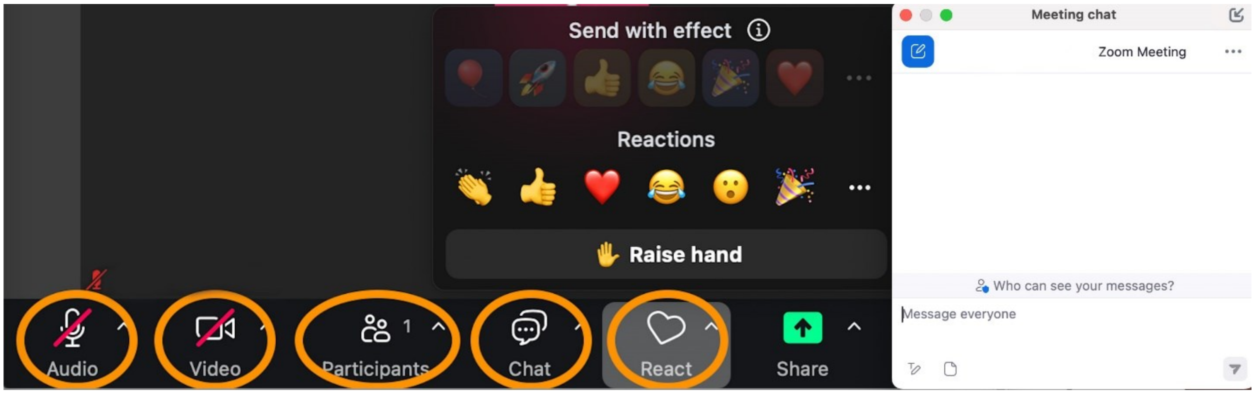
- **Before**
  - Choose a platform: Select either Zoom or Microsoft Teams and check that the platform supports the desired meeting features and can accommodate the expected number of participants.
  - Define roles: Designate staff roles for facilitation and notetaking to capture public input. Additional roles may include a virtual platform manager and polling system manager. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
  - Outreach: Conduct outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers or social media.
    - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and groups that may be particularly interested in the topic.
  - Meeting registration**:** Send a calendar invitation or registration link with meeting details and clear instructions on how to join and participate in the meeting.
    - Requiring participants to register with their name & email address to receive the login information can add a layer of security.
      - Meeting platform settings can allow for advance registration.

        - Provide the option for registrants to indicate a request for language interpretation services or accessibility accommodations.
        - Email the meeting agenda to participants ahead of the meeting.
- Interpretation:
    - Provide any language interpreters the meeting materials in advance of the meeting.
    - Schedule interpreters on the meeting platform as needed.
- Prepare materials: Develop meeting materials (e.g., slides, handouts, group exercises, interactive meeting features). Interactive meeting features can include:
    - Agenda: Develop an agenda.
    - Interactive polling (e.g., Conferences I/O, Zoom): Used to gather real-time feedback through word clouds, multiple choice questions and ranking exercises.
    - Virtual whiteboard (e.g., Mural, Miro): Can be used in breakout rooms to gather input through guided discussion prompts where staff guide participants through a series of questions/prompts and record their feedback on a shared screen whiteboard.
    - Breakout rooms: Determining the number of rooms will help determine the number of staff needed. Make a room assignments table and alternate arrangements in case of staff's internet going out.
    - Exit polls: Exit polls can gather demographic and/or event satisfaction information from participants to understand attendance and prepare for future events.
- Have backup solutions: Plan for contingencies and have backup solutions, such as alternative platforms or staff communication channels, in case of technical difficulties or outages.
- Platform settings: Prior to the meeting, check settings within the meeting platform to allow for host flexibility and functions to prevent unexpected interruptions, limit distractions, uphold the productive engagement event guidelines and preserve the intended flow of the meeting. The following settings should be enabled (if available):
    - Do not let participants join before the host so hosts can set up the meeting prior to participants joining.
    - Disable any private chat functionality to allow a streamlined conversation between hosts and participants. If the chat feature is not desired, turn it off for participants but allow hosts/co-hosts to communicate with each other.
    - Host has capability to designate co-hosts.

        - Turn off participant screen-sharing when applicable to allow hosts to share presentations without interruption.
        - Do not allow removed participants to re-join to prevent repeated disruptions.
        - Participants should be muted when entering to avoid accidental interruptions.
        - Turn off participant video feeds, if not off by default, to avoid unnecessary distractions.
        - Do not allow participants to rename themselves during the meeting to limit the potential use of vulgar language.
    - Meeting recording: Decide if the meeting, meeting chats and transcription will be recorded for later use. Publishing recorded meetings on the City's YouTube channel is an efficient way of sharing information with more stakeholders and can be useful for anyone who could not attend the meeting.
        - Consider that publicly available information can be recorded, but it may not be appropriate to record sensitive information or personal contact details.
    - Check meeting technology: Update meeting technology before the meeting and close any web browsers or programs not being used before beginning the meeting.
        - Silence all notifications.
    - Virtual background: Select and upload a virtual background for presenters who will be on-camera
    - Dry run: Conduct a dry run before the official meeting to test all technology and features and clearly identify roles to minimize disruptions.

- **During**
    - Event guidelines or agreements: Share the productive engagement event guidelines or create engagement event agreements.
    - Hard-wired internet: Host the web-based meeting from a hard-wired internet connection if possible, avoiding Wi-Fi due to the fluctuating internet speeds and increased reliability of hard-wired connections.
    - Name tags: Meeting hosts' name tags should have the organization they work for after their name, then title, then optional preferred pronouns. (e.g., John Doe, City of San Diego, Senior Planner, he/him/his). This will allow meeting participants to quickly identify each person.
    - Recording disclosure: Verbally disclose any recording to the participants.
        - Most web-based meeting platforms notify attendees that a recording is in process when joining.

- Interpreted channels: Open any language channels and designate the correct interpreters for the language channel after announcing that specific language interpretation is available, and the channels are open.
  - On Zoom, request that all attendees choose a language channel, even if they wish to stay in the English channel.
- Technology orientation: Provide participants with a technology orientation by walking through the basics of the platform tools participants will use to participate and provide feedback.



1. "Mute" when not speaking.
2. Raise hand virtually if you have a question. "Raise Hand" may be under react or participants window.
3. Use Chat to share written questions or comments.
4. Turn on Video during Breakout Room discussion segment.

- Video camera: Hosts and co-hosts should limit/turn cameras off when not speaking or presenting. Cameras should be on during breakout room activities.
- Screensharing best practices: Prior to sharing screen, hide sensitive information, disable chat, hide speaker notes, share individual windows and use an additional monitor if possible.
- Ask for feedback: Optionally allow participants to share feedback about the event. This can be done by conducting an exit poll and/or sending a follow-up email to participants.
  - The questions in the exit poll can match questions typically seen in a participant satisfaction survey.
- Next steps: Note any next steps or future opportunities for engagement.

- **After**
  - Consider making the meeting recording available afterward for those unable to attend live and/or a summary of key points and decisions.

Hybrid meetings

In addition to web-based meeting considerations, consider the following for staff-led hybrid meetings:

- **Before**
    - Choose accessible venues: Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
    - Assess needs: Take stock of available audiovisual equipment, internet connectivity, room layout, power supply, room acoustics and estimate the number of in-person and virtual attendees. Some rooms are less equipped than others, so some equipment will need to be brought in to successfully run a hybrid meeting. For City facilities, take note of any on-site contact who may be able to help assess and plan.
    - Make necessary equipment reservations: If a department has available equipment, it may need to be reserved prior to the event.
    - Test equipment: Conduct a test of all equipment and connections in the event room, including internet connectivity and stability, audiovisual devices and virtual platform settings.
        - Check that both in-person and virtual participants can clearly see, hear and interact during the meeting.
        - Check that equipment is charged and will last for the duration of the meeting. Have spare batteries on hand, or plug equipment directly into a power source, if possible.
    - Camera setup: Set up a camera to focus on the front of the room so virtual participants can clearly see in-person speakers. If possible, set up the camera on a tripod that can be moved if the meeting's focal point changes. If the footage is being recorded, choose a storage device with enough space to record the duration of the meeting. Have a spare memory card on hand.
    - Audio setup: Depending on the size of the event, additional audio equipment may need to be brought in. Avoid microphone feedback by spacing microphones away from the speakers and limiting devices with microphones and audio on in the same room. Check that audio for the virtual portion is only active on one device in the room. Consider turning on noise suppression on the audio capturing device to reduce background noise for listeners.

- **During**
  - Monitor the virtual feed: Consider having some staff attend virtually to confirm that the audio and visual feeds are working properly throughout the meeting. Instate an in-person point person to coordinate with the virtually attending staff if troubleshooting is needed.
  - Wait for responses: Due to participants being online and in-person, allow additional time for online participants to respond or interact in case there is a lag in the feed. Consider alternating between in-person and virtual respondents to allow the next person in each queue to prepare.
  - Have speakers raise their hand first: Doing so will prevent online and in-person speakers from speaking over one another.
  - State names: Encourage speakers to state their name before speaking to help both audiences understand who is speaking.

- **After**
  - Capture input and share, if necessary: Digitize any in-person input and collate it with any virtual input for recordkeeping. If necessary, share any summarized feedback captured from the event with participants in addition to the meeting recording.
  - Take stock of equipment and its condition: Return all audiovisual equipment and store it properly for their next use. Take note of any needs, including replacement cords, spare batteries or memory cards.

*If staff decide to hire an audiovisual company, their services should capture many of these considerations. Brief the audiovisual team on event goals, roles and a logistics plan so that the meeting runs smoothly.

Cost: Minimal to Moderate	The cost to set up, run and facilitate web-based and hybrid meetings can vary. Web-based meetings often only require a subscription to a virtual meeting platform to be successful. However, different types of meetings may require additional costs to accommodate features like webinars, analytics or large meeting capabilities. Hybrid meetings can also include the cost of the venue and any equipment. For hybrid events, hiring an audiovisual company and renting audiovisual equipment may cost a few thousand dollars, depending on the amount of equipment and on-site support needed.
Time: Minimal to Moderate	The time it takes to plan web-based and hybrid meetings depends on the number of interactive meeting components. This can range from a few weeks for less involved meetings to a few months for complex meetings.
Capacity: Minimal to High	Staff capacity varies depending on the amount of interactive meeting components and how involved the meeting will be. Web-based meetings will require less staff than hybrid meetings, as hybrid meetings require online and in-person hosts.

Other considerations

- Some web-based meeting platforms include a dial-in line function that allow participants to call in, listen to and participate in discussions from panelists. This is sometimes referred to as a telephone town hall.
    - This format is useful for engaging with people who may have limited access to technology or are uncomfortable with using video software.
    - The host of a dial-in line will need a Zoom Pro (up to 100 participants) or Zoom Business (up to 300 participants) license. Contact the Department of Information Technology before the event to ensure the host's Zoom account has the right audience capacity.
    - Share the Zoom meeting dial-in phone number with the public ahead of the meeting.
- Select the virtual format that is most appropriate for the event. Virtual meeting-style events generally give participants more access to tools that let them interact with presenters. Webinar-style events allow for less interaction with the audience but provide additional control and security.

How to make it more inclusive

- Follow document accessibility best practices.
- Consider the accessibility needs of participants, such as providing interpretation, live transcription, or compatible screen reader software.
- Send any resource links sent in chat by email as well.
- Be mindful of people's differing access to technology and consider providing resources such as public access points for equitable participation or participation support in web-based/hybrid meetings.
- Consider hosting web-based/hybrid meetings at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.

Webpages

What is it?

Webpages are documents that are displayed and accessed online using a web browser. They contain information that can be delivered as text, images, audio or video. The City uses webpages as tools for sharing information so the public can learn about or understand City projects. Webpages may include additional interactive elements such as story maps and surveys.

When to use it

External-facing City projects should have webpages available for the entire duration of the project to allow the public to stay connected and informed.

Use webpages to inform people across a large area, provide context about existing projects and participation opportunities or create calls to action. Use webpages to follow up with the public by posting adopted documents and next steps.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Write the text of the webpage following the City's Writing Style Guide. Determine which images and other graphics will be needed on the page, adhering to the Visual Style Guide. Reference the City's Pattern Library for information on what types of features the Web Services team can incorporate on the page. Lay out all desired text, images, graphics and features in a Word document. Include common search terms in the text to improve search engine optimization and help the page come up higher in an internet search.
    - Remember that the webpage should include the following:
        - The project's description, purpose, goals, documents and relevant background information.
        - How to contact City staff for questions or comments.
    - The department's Public Information Officer should review the webpage for clarity and AP style before publishing. For departments without an assigned Public Information Officer, email the Communications Department if this is needed.
    - Upload the Word document and any images in a OneDrive folder. Share the folder with the Web Services team.
        - The Web Team will add the project to their queue and provide an estimated completion time for the first draft.
- **During**
    - Update the webpage with any new information or opportunities for engagement.
        - Make the public engagement timeline available.
        - Share any relevant fact sheets and draft documents for review.

- Share location and dates of available public engagement events and public hearings.
- Update the page to include a public input tool, if applicable.
- Embed an email sign-up form to allow the public to stay informed on updates.

  - Files that need to be added to the webpage should be in PDF format, which is compressed and optimized for online viewing. Native files, such as Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, should be avoided because they may require the user to purchase software. PDFs are preferred since they can be viewed with free software.

- **After**
  - When projects have ended, update the webpages as needed. Updates may include posting next steps and closing email sign-up forms.
  - If a project is approved by City Council, update the page with adopted documents, relevant materials and context about how plans can benefit community members. Old webpages should be archived and stored per Public Records Act standards.

Cost: Minimal	There is no additional cost to this technique because the Web Team maintains access to Drupal, the City's webpage content management software.
Time: Moderate	Time to draft webpages varies depending on the content's complexity and the level of review. The Web Team may take up to a few weeks to complete the first draft of the webpage.
Capacity: Moderate	Writing and reviewing new webpages may need several staff members. Updating webpages should be quick and only require one staff member.

Other considerations

- Have a schedule for webpage updates to keep information accurate and timely. It is recommended to review and update webpages shortly after any major project updates or at least quarterly.
- Work with the Web Services team to review webpage analytics to understand the audience reach.
- Provide documents in PDF format to allow for easy printing and downloading.

How to make it more inclusive

- Use graphics, images, icons and simple words so people of all backgrounds can easily understand the content.
- Check that mobile devices display the webpage cohesively.
- Use clear, simple and inclusive language and follow document accessibility best practices.

Workshops

What is it?
A workshop is a structured and interactive event where community members can provide input on projects through discussions, problem-solving and visioning. Participants may engage in small group activities to identify issues and priorities and offer feedback to the larger group at the conclusion of the event.

When to use it
Workshops are best used to help participants develop ideas through conversations and collaboration with others. They are particularly effective for surfacing issues and new solutions and gathering in-depth feedback.

How to do it

- **Before**
    - Clearly define the workshop objectives and determine what types of feedback are desired from the workshop. Plan for activities that help facilitate conversations around that feedback.
    - Identify any activities that would be appropriate to incorporate into the workshop such as vision walls, project models, mapping exercises or a design-focused activity.
        - Develop an agenda.
        - Develop any visual aids needed to help explain key concepts or complex information.
        - Gather supplies for any planned activities.
        - Consider and assign roles that may be needed, such as facilitators and notetakers. Ensure City staff subject matter experts are available to address questions the public may have.
    - Choose venues that are fully accessible, including parking, entrances and restrooms. Choose venues near transit and that have adequate parking.
        - Identify an area with enough space, seating and appropriate audiovisual equipment for workshop activities.
    - Conduct pre-meeting outreach to invite and encourage participation, such as using email notifications, flyers and social media.
        - Consider if outreach materials should be translated based on the intended audience.
        - Consider asking people to register for the meeting to provide a sense of the number and interests of attendees.
        - In addition to standard outreach channels, directly contact organizations and people that may be particularly interested in the topic.

  - Prepare workshop materials, which may include participant handouts, supplies for planned activities, materials to record ideas or display information, and audiovisual equipment.
  - Schedule and conduct practice session(s) at least one week before the meeting to review the agenda and roles.
  - Arrive at the venue early for any necessary set-up. Arrange seating to allow for small groups of four to nine people.
- **During**
  - Welcome attendees. Build in some extra time for arrival at the beginning.
  - Provide a sign-in sheet to collect names and optional contact information of attendees to share project updates.
  - Share the productive engagement event guidelines or create engagement event agreements.
  - Help participants understand the context of the project. Consider presenting on the project's background, purpose and other key information so that participants are prepared for providing input.
  - Start off with simple questions that build rapport and allow participants to get to know each other.
  - Encourage engagement with a variety of activities within small groups; this may include brainstorming using poster boards, visual preference surveys or mapping exercises. Facilitate each small group as needed and allow small groups to share their ideas with the larger group.
  - Optionally allow participants to share feedback about the engagement event using a participant satisfaction survey.
  - Note any next steps in the project and future opportunities for engagement.
- **After**
  - Compile, digitize and review collected input to inform decision-making. Upload any sign-ups for the project contact list.
  - Follow up as needed with answers to any questions that came up during the workshop.
  - Workshop summaries can be developed to share with attendees and the broader public.
  - It is recommended to save all hard copies of material (maps, boards, paper rolls, posters, etc.) until the end of a project in case another workshop needs to be done, or if staff need to reference the feedback gathered.

Cost: Moderate	Expenses may be minimal as City facilities are available for hosting workshops for free or a small rental fee. Costs will vary depending on materials developed, participation support provided and any consultant support.
Time: Moderate to High	Planning a workshop can take about two months. Workshops themselves last only a few hours, but design-focused workshops may take place across multiple sessions.
Capacity: High	A full team is needed to support a workshop, including planning, facilitation of breakout groups, note-taking and logistical support.

Other considerations

- For design-focused workshops, consider conducting activities like brainstorming, sketching or model-building.
- Workshops may be particularly helpful in the early stages of a project to explore design possibilities and refine them.
- City-prepared workshop materials are considered a public record and should be retained in a manner consistent with the department's record retention policy.

How to make it more inclusive

- Children can also provide input at workshops, using activities such as games or art.
- Simplify visual and written materials by using clear, simple and inclusive language, and label any images and maps with recognizable community landmarks and street names.
- Consider using 3D elements like building blocks, simple models and figurines to help guide visioning exercises for visual and tactile learners.
- Consider hosting workshops at different times of day/days of the week to accommodate different schedules.
- Identify any language access needs in advance and consider providing participation support.
- Offer multiple ways for people to share their perspectives (verbally, in writing, etc.).

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

Introduction

Communicating with the Public outlines communication strategies and approaches staff can use to bolster public outreach and engagement. Clear and understandable communication helps the public understand City projects and how they can contribute to decision-making.

Approaches to communication and engagement with the public may also be trauma-informed, and can be tailored to different types of learners.

This section includes recommendations on verbal and written communication, including use of clear, simple and inclusive language and affirmative language to convey project information and encourage broader public participation. This section also provides guidance on nonverbal and graphic communication.

Lastly, the section provides resources on a variety of communication topics including public speaking and engagement event facilitation, paid advertisement considerations, conflict management, translation and interpretation and document accessibility.

Affirmative Language

Affirmative language refers to positive and supportive words or phrases that encourage people to take a certain action. It focuses on what is possible and helps motivate rather than highlighting deficits, barriers or negativity by telling the public what they *can* do, rather than focusing on what they *cannot* do. Framing messages positively can also avoid the unintended effect of resistance that people may feel if they sense they are being restricted. When possible, staff should use affirmative language to help build trust, inspire participation and create a more welcoming environment.

For example, the City's Love 'Em and Leash 'Em campaign employs affirmative language to encourage dog owners to keep their pets on a leash using a positive and engaging tone, as opposed to telling dog owners what *not* to do.

Clear, Simple and Inclusive Language

Staff should use clear, simple and inclusive language when communicating with the public. Clear and simple language, also known as plain language, is a communication style that increases understanding and supports the public's ability to engage in City projects. Inclusive language is affirming words and phrases that include people of all identities. These communication styles accommodate all people so that they can easily understand the message regardless of their knowledge or background on a given topic.

Scannable writing

Readers should be able to visually scan documents easily. Therefore, documents should have an organized structure and appropriate headlines to help readers find what they are looking for.

When possible, use bullet points, tables and graphics to convey information instead of long paragraphs of text. These elements help break up information into straightforward sections.

Clear, short sentences

Use short sentences to help readers understand the message quickly. Write sentences with the fewest words possible. For a general audience, writing should be at an 8^{th}-grade reading level or lower – use the Hemingway App to check for readability.

Active voice

Write in the active voice, where the subject performs the action of a verb. For example, a sentence written in passive voice, such as, "The policy was approved by the City Council," should instead state, "The City Council approved the policy." Active voice sentences are typically more concise than passive voice sentences.

Avoid jargon and acronyms

The public may not be familiar with technical terms or acronyms. Always spell out the full name or phrase on first reference. For instance, use "San Diego Police Department" instead of "SDPD". Additionally, when writing non-technical documents or speaking, refrain from using technical language. Departments may standardize frequently used terms to avoid jargon and acronyms when writing.

AP style of writing

The City follows AP style for writing to facilitate the consistent use of common terms. The Communications Department has developed a Writing Style Guide for staff reference that covers City-specific and common terms. Staff also can use Grammarly to support their writing.

Language for all people

Do not assume people's identities. Instead, keep terms general and reference a theoretical person. Refrain from stereotyping language. Additionally, while some projects may apply to specific groups, the City's audience should often be referred to as community members or the public—people who work, live and play within City boundaries. Use unifying words to describe identity or circumstances. Prefixes like "non-" indicate that the person is lacking or something other than the norm. Find alternatives that don't ostracize groups of people.

Say This	Not That
Board Chair	Board Chairman
When they submit a request…	When he/she submits a request…
older adult	elderly
person of color	non-white

People-first terms

Use people-first terms to emphasize a person before their abilities or situation and demonstrate that a condition is only one part of the whole person. These terms often state that a person *has* something rather than *is* something.

Say This	Not That
People with disabilities	Disabled
Person experiencing homelessness	Homeless person
Person with a mental health condition	Mentally ill person

Socioeconomic status

Use language that includes all socioeconomic statuses. Words should convey facts about a person or area's socioeconomic status and not perpetuate classism.

Say This	Not That
Households with lower incomes	The poor
People with high incomes	Rich people
People receiving welfare benefits	Welfare recipients

Universal phrases

Universal phrases, which do not use idioms, jargon or violent language, are best for clearly communicating with the public.

Say This	Not That
Easy	Piece of cake
Aware	In the loop
Group of focus	Target population
Try	Take a shot at

Communication Strategies for Different Learners

What are the different types of learners?
People may learn best by seeing (visual learners), hearing (auditory learners) or doing (kinesthetic learners). These learning styles all have different strengths and preferences may differ based on a person's age, neurodiversity, or previous experiences.

When possible, create public outreach and engagement opportunities that cater to different learning styles for more effective learning experiences.

What are the types of strategies for different learners?
The following strategies and formats can help City staff appeal to different types of learners and enhance the retention and comprehension of outreach and engagement materials at public events:

- Visual learners prefer to see what they are learning. Recommended techniques to help visual learners participate include:
  - Using diagrams, photos, charts and maps
  - Highlighting or labeling key points in texts or presentations
  - Using color coding in presentations or materials
- Auditory learners prefer to hear what they are learning. Recommended techniques to help auditory learners participate include:
  - Organizing group discussions
  - Providing verbal explanations, questions, feedback or repetitions to clarify main ideas
  - Using videos, songs or podcasts
- Kinesthetic learners prefer to learn by doing, through movement and tactile (touch) memory. Recommended techniques to help kinesthetic learners participate include:
  - Organizing tours and field trips
  - Using arts-based engagement or vision walls
  - Using interactive tools and props to demonstrate concepts

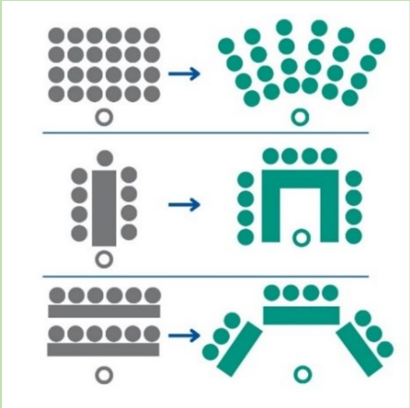
Conflict Management

What is it?

Conflict or disagreement is a natural part of engagement. Conflict management provides strategies to prepare for and resolve conflict situations during public engagement. Effective conflict management maintains an inclusive environment and leads to more productive conversations with the public. Staff should keep conflict management strategies in mind during the public engagement process.

Strategies to prepare for and address conflict

Before an event

Action	Description
Take a temperature check	Take a moment to understand public sentiment toward the project and engagement event.
Keep an open mindset	Keep an open mind and be receptive to listening. Assuming that the public has good intentions allows staff to have more productive discussions with the public.
Consider the engagement techniques	Consider using engagement techniques such as community office hours, focus groups, workshops and project-specific groups to help mitigate conflict.
Consider staff's lived experiences and background knowledge	When choosing lead staff for the engagement event, consider those with connections, lived experiences or historical knowledge of the community. Additionally, consider including those with institutional knowledge of the project and background on broader topics related to the City's work in the community. They can help staff understand underlying challenges and may more easily connect with participants.
Prepare logistics	For in-person events, arrange the room to facilitate participation, such as integrating the speaker with the participants.  *Figure 2: The seating formats in gray are traditional room set ups. The formats in green may work better for conflict management. Seats can be angled toward the speaker or in a more open format to encourage focused discussion* Providing refreshments at in-person events can help put people at ease. For web-based meetings, check the platform settings to ensure attendees can participate in ways conducive to the goals of the event.

During an event

Action	Description
Maintain process neutrality	The facilitator(s) and staff should remain as impartial as possible about engagement outcomes and ongoing City decision-making so as not to escalate conflict by advocating for certain outcomes.
Communicate public input expectations clearly	Share the standard productive engagement event guidelines, or if time permits, have participants collaborate to create engagement event agreements that will be upheld for their meeting. Guidelines or agreements should always be visible so participants can refer to them throughout the meeting. Be transparent with participants about how they can provide their input and how input will be used. Specify if there are any time limits for comments to ensure enough time for everyone who wishes to contribute. Designate staff for notetaking to ensure all input is adequately captured. For written input, consider using techniques such as polls and word clouds to help focus participation and demonstrate to participants that their input is being captured.
Listen actively	Actively listen without judgment to the public's perspectives and demonstrate empathy. If participants express strong emotions, staff can validate their perspectives and affirm the importance of their participation.
Maintain open body language	Maintain open body language and a neutral demeanor to convey trustworthiness. See the *Nonverbal Communication* section to learn more about nonverbal communication strategies.
Capture input	If feasible, capture input in a way that is visible to participants. This approach can assist participants in following the conversation while also confirming that their contributions have been acknowledged and documented.
Work as a team	When possible, working as team will help staff avoid burnout. For example, have more than one staff member serve as the presenter.
Take an emotionally intelligent approach	Staff's perceptions of the public will affect how they speak to them. Keeping a positive mindset that is focused on partnering with the public toward solutions can help staff maintain productive and calm conversations.
Provide high-quality answers	Provide honest and concise answers. When the public asks questions to which staff do not know answers, staff do not need to provide an answer immediately. If possible, staff should provide an open line of communication with participants and clearly define if and when an answer can be made available.

If Conflict Arises During an Event	
Scale	**Actions to De-escalate**
Small-scale disruption (one person or small group)	Try to settle the conflict by taking immediate action to remind participants of the established engagement event agreements or guidelines. React quickly to keep an open and collaborative environment for all to participate in. Shift the conversation by pointing out ways participants can provide valuable input during an event and emphasize the event's purpose or agenda. Maintain a calm, matter-of-fact tone that expresses intent to keep the event on track and inclusive. If the participant(s) continues to be disruptive, it may be helpful to bring them aside to talk with them one-on-one if it is safe to do so, and have other staff continue the event.
Large-scale disruption (multiple participants or large groups of people)	Validate participants' feelings by acknowledging their concerns while providing clear and calm instructions to participants about the event's purpose or agenda. Adapt plans as necessary by pausing, reassessing the engagement and deciding whether to continue or reschedule. Be willing to change aspects of the event if many participants convey dissatisfaction with their ability to meaningfully participate.

After an event

Action	Description
Decompress	Check-in with teammates to identify and coordinate lessons learned from the situation. Recognize and legitimize feelings. Venting to a trusted person, such as a spouse, close friend or licensed professional can help with processing if the event was a negative experience.
Compartmentalize roles	Keeping professional roles and personal life compartmentalized can help staff maintain a healthy work-life balance and build resilience. Remember that the public's frustrations are typically not personal.
Evaluate for future events	Evaluate how to manage future events based on lessons learned.

Document Accessibility

What it is

The Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, protects the rights of people with disabilities. Document accessibility refers to making documents, webpages and presentations legible to people of all abilities. These practices should be incorporated to increase the accessibility of all City projects for the public. The following guidelines make digital media compatible with screen readers and accessible to people with sight, mobility and hearing disabilities. Screen readers are software programs that allow people with sight disabilities to read text displayed on a screen. Consult the City Web Team for support with accessibility features on webpages and web forms.

How to do it

All documents

For all documents, keep the following accessibility tips in mind.

- Consider people with sight disabilities when depicting data. Instead of using color as the only differentiator between sets of data, use a combination of color, shapes and patterns to further distinguish different data on graphs, charts and maps.

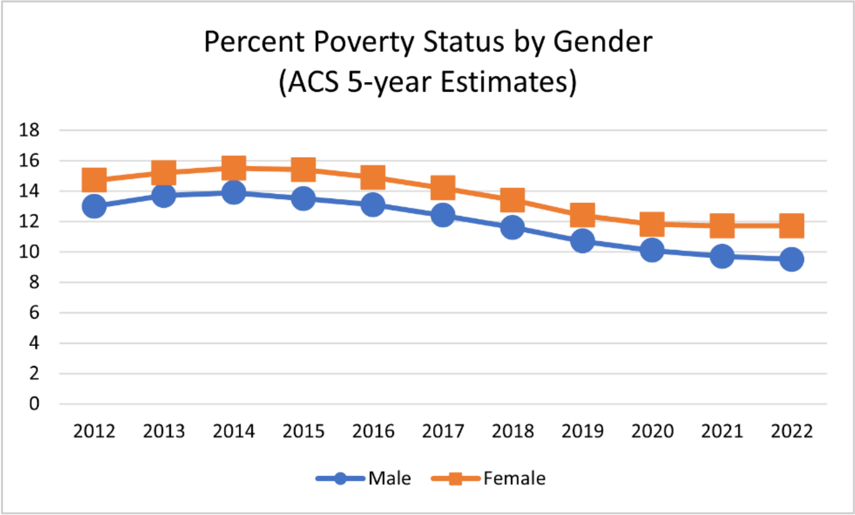


Figure 3: A line graph that uses both shapes and colors to differentiate between the two data sets that are being compared. Data Source: data.census.gov American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2012 to 2022

- Add alternative text to graphics and charts that contain important information and functions. Alternative text is a written description conveying an image's meaning. This makes documents compatible with screen readers so that people with sight disabilities do not miss any key information. Alternative text can easily be added in Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF. Note that alternative text is not the same as a caption.

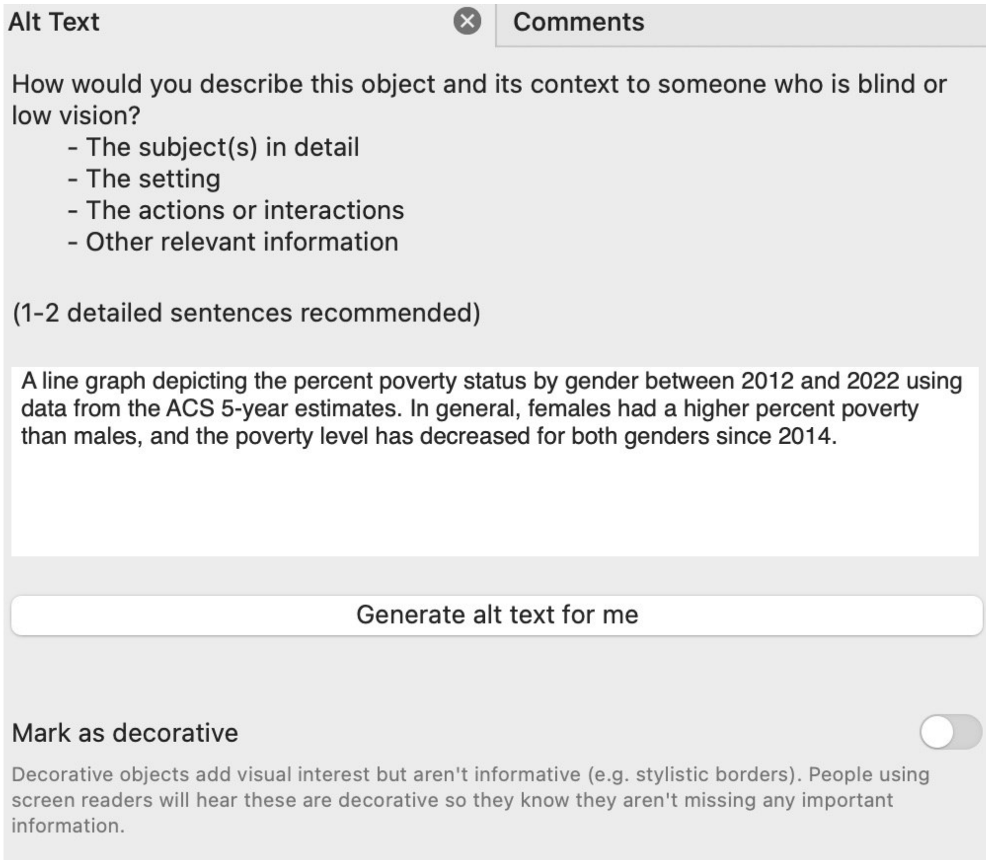
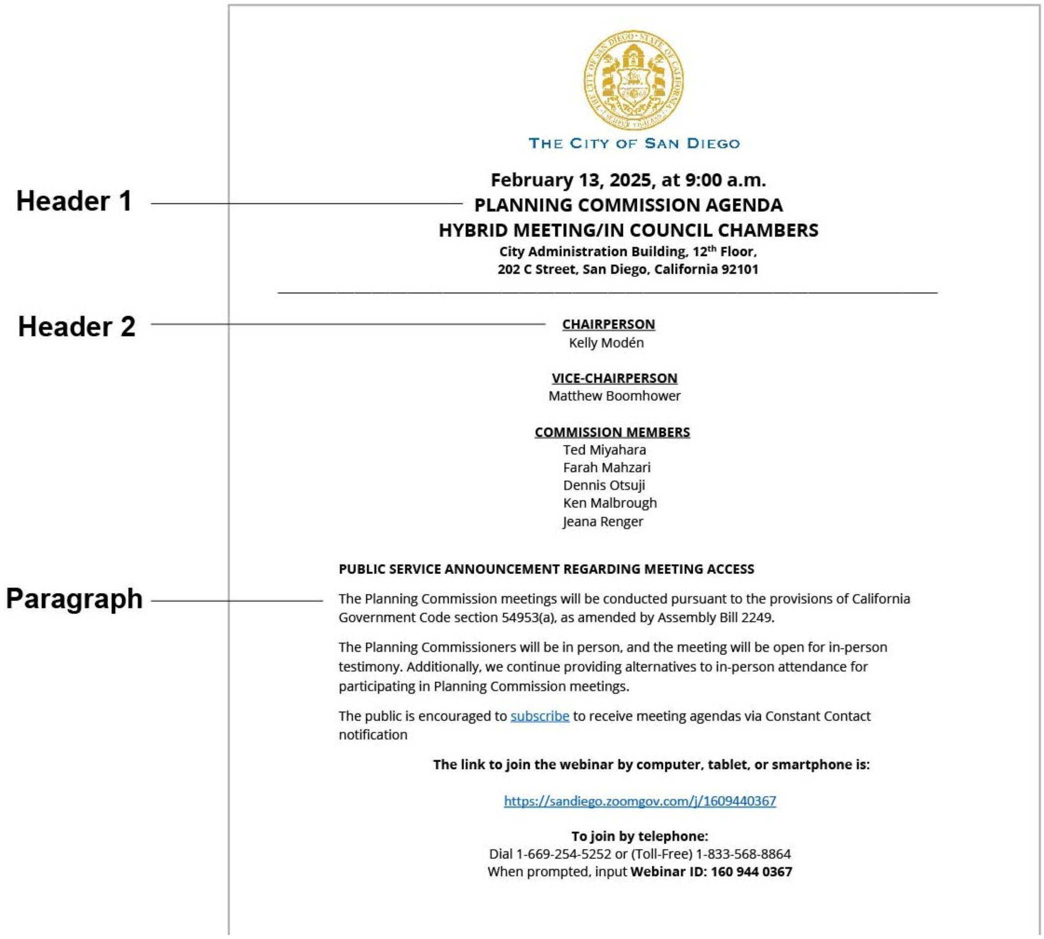


Figure 4: Screenshot of the Alt Text Input Box for a Microsoft Word document.

An alternative text input box in Microsoft Word. This example shows alternative text that can be added for Figure 3 above. It reads "A line graph depicting the percent poverty status by gender between 2012 and 2022 using data from the American Community Survey 5-Year estimates. In general, females had a higher percent poverty than males, and the poverty level has decrease for both genders since 2014

- Consider using high-contrast colors when drafting documents and images. In most cases, a light background with dark text is preferred. Contrast-checking tools can help check for adequate contrast.
- Typefaces, font sizes and image sizes and quality will impact the legibility of a document.
- Design digital documents so that:
    - People can navigate and complete all tasks using a keyboard.
    - Information is ordered logically, typically from left to right and top to bottom.
- Use headings appropriately, as screen reader users can type commands to find different parts of a document. Add screen reader labels that include the level of the heading, followed by the title of the heading.



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

February 13, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.
PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA
HYBRID MEETING/IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
City Administration Building, 12th Floor,
202 C Street, San Diego, California 92101

CHAIRPERSON
Kelly Modén

VICE-CHAIRPERSON
Matthew Boomhower

COMMISSION MEMBERS
Ted Miyahara
Farah Mahzari
Dennis Otsuji
Ken Malbrough
Jeana Renger

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING MEETING ACCESS

The Planning Commission meetings will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of California Government Code section 54953(a), as amended by Assembly Bill 2249.

The Planning Commissioners will be in person, and the meeting will be open for in-person testimony. Additionally, we continue providing alternatives to in-person attendance for participating in Planning Commission meetings.

The public is encouraged to subscribe to receive meeting agendas via Constant Contact notification

The link to join the webinar by computer, tablet, or smartphone is:

https://sandiego.zoomgov.com/j/1609440367

To join by telephone:
Dial 1-669-254-5252 or (Toll-Free) 1-833-568-8864
When prompted, input **Webinar ID: 160 944 0367**

Figure 5: An example document that follows a clearly defined heading structure.

- An accessibility check assesses potential barriers to accessibility and identifies areas for improvement. Applications such as Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat both have accessibility check options. In addition to built-in accessibility checkers, staff should also check for accessibility themselves. Run the document through Windows Narrator to ensure it reads correctly and help find any mistakes.

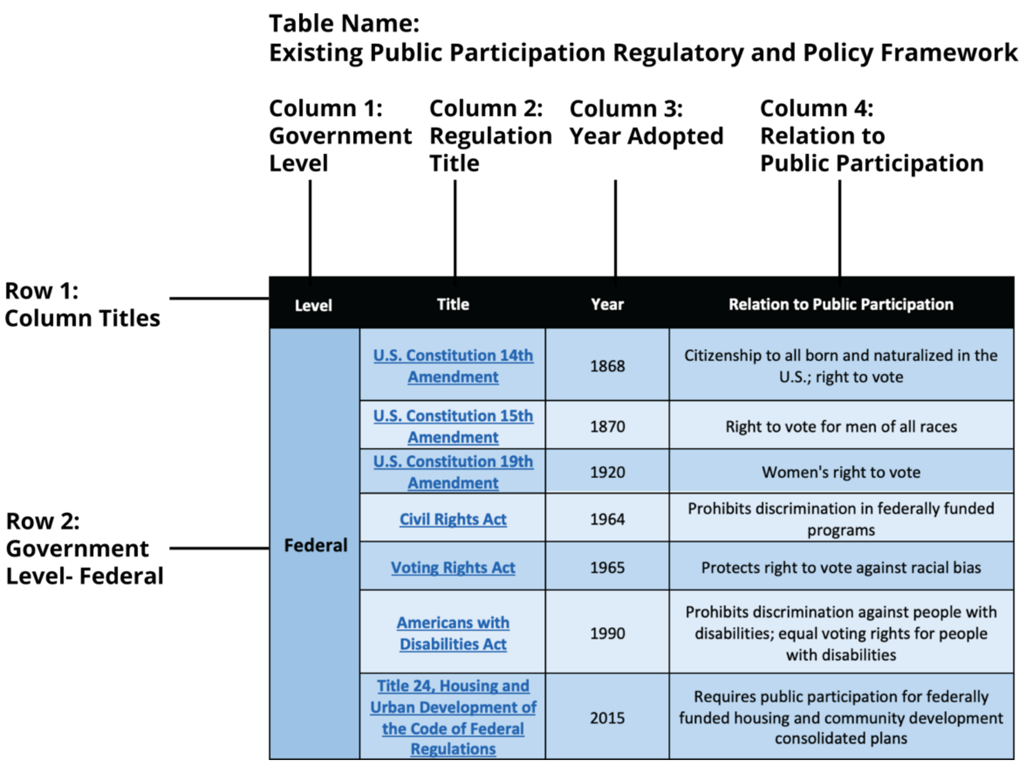
PDFs

The PDF format offers additional functionality not available in standard Word documents. Some of these features include user-fillable fields, interactive buttons and hyperlinks to flip to a certain section or page. When designing an interactive PDF, consider the following:

- Label all fields with their function so that people using a screen reader know how to interact with the field. Field placeholders should also be used for easy comprehension of what entry is expected of the user.

  For example, the label for a date field would be "Date," and the placeholder for a date would be MM/DD/YYYY.

- Tag tables with the table name, column title and column number for easier legibility and navigation.



Level	Title	Year	Relation to Public Participation
Federal	U.S. Constitution 14th Amendment	1868	Citizenship to all born and naturalized in the U.S.; right to vote
	U.S. Constitution 15th Amendment	1870	Right to vote for men of all races
	U.S. Constitution 19th Amendment	1920	Women's right to vote
	Civil Rights Act	1964	Prohibits discrimination in federally funded programs
	Voting Rights Act	1965	Protects right to vote against racial bias
	Americans with Disabilities Act	1990	Prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities; equal voting rights for people with disabilities
	Title 24, Housing and Urban Development of the Code of Federal Regulations	2015	Requires public participation for federally funded housing and community development consolidated plans

Figure 6: An example table that follows a clearly defined column and row structure.

- Links should include screen reader-only text that explains the link rather than only the linked text. Provide a description for a link to help the reader understand the context.

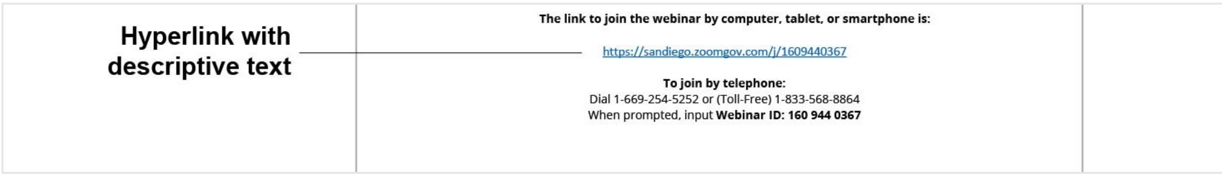


Figure 7: A hyperlink that uses descriptive text instead of using the word 'Link' to signify additional material. The example includes the description, "The link to join the webinar by computer, tablet or smartphone is:" before providing a link.

Microsoft PowerPoint

- Enable live transcription on PowerPoint during presentations. Also, add captions to any video embedded in a PowerPoint presentation.
- Limit the use of animations and consider whether they will impact the readability of the material. If animations are used, provide a warning prior to any animations for people who may have photosensitivity or epilepsy.

Additional resources

- City Website Accessibility
- ADA Policies and Regulations

Facilitation of Engagement Events

Facilitators lead and manage public engagement events. A facilitator can help achieve goals for effective project communication, respectful and productive event environments and inclusive participation. Public engagement events that may benefit from having a facilitator include public meetings, workshops, or project-specific groups.

What is a facilitator?

The facilitator of a public engagement event ensures that the event fulfills its intended purpose. Throughout the event, the facilitator can help create an environment where all involved parties are respected, welcomed and feel comfortable participating. Facilitators typically lead the event and are viewed as the person "in charge."

Roles of a facilitator

Facilitators can fill several different but related roles for public engagement events:

- A neutral party who is independent of any specific interests of stakeholders. Facilitators play a separate role from that of a project team's subject-matter experts, who provide technical knowledge and expertise. Facilitators should strive to be impartial on the specific outcomes of the engagement event and project, and advocate for a meaningful participatory process.
    - When City staff assume the role of facilitator, it is important to remain impartial about the project, engagement outcomes and ongoing City policy discussions.
- Communicator who helps the project teams convey project information to event participants in clear, understandable terms that people can relate to.
- A "master of ceremonies" to run the event, keep the discussion focused on the established agenda and track timing so that all intended activities are completed on time.
- When applicable, an empathetic guide for discussions to elicit input that can be meaningfully addressed and used by decision-makers and to uncover community feedback previously unknown to decision-makers.
- An attentive ear that listens to input and discussions that happen during the event.
- A monitor of disrespectful actions or words that detract from a productive event environment, using conflict management strategies to keep events productive.

Selecting a facilitator

Consultant facilitators can bring specialized knowledge and experience in participatory processes, community engagement and conflict resolution. Because of the importance of facilitators being neutral on project outcomes, the City has often used consultants for facilitation roles, especially when a project has generated significant community concern or controversy.

However, budgets and resources may preclude a project team's ability to engage a consultant facilitator. One strategy is to fill the facilitator role with a staff member not involved in the project because they can focus on supporting the engagement process during the event.

If the only person available for the facilitator role is a staff member of the project team, with preparation they can still successfully integrate the roles of the facilitator with serving as a project team member.

Facilitation process

Like many engagement events, a successful facilitation process requires thoughtful pre-planning, team coordination and a plan of how the engagement will be reported back to participants. Below are guidelines for a successful facilitation process broken down by phase.

The facilitator should be involved throughout engagement planning and preparation. The facilitator should consider if any adjustments are needed to help with the facilitation process. Additionally, consultant facilitators can advise on approaches to increase the event's effectiveness.

Before

Pre-event planning, coordination and preparation can easily account for more work than the actual event. However, investment in planning and preparation will help achieve goals for effective project communication, respectful and productive environments and inclusive participation. Completing Steps 1 through 6 of the Steps for Conducting Effective Public Participation will help support the facilitation process. The facilitator can also consider the following before an event.

- Define staff roles for the engagement event.
- Conduct at least one practice run before the event.
- If small group discussions are planned, conduct a separate training session for facilitators, notetakers and subject matter experts who are supporting the groups. In the training, review the purpose, timing and instructions for notetaking.

Inclusivity considerations

The facilitator has an important role in accomplishing the City's objectives for involving diverse communities. Consider the following to make facilitation more inclusive.

Cultural variation in norms, social interaction and communication

The facilitator should work with the project team to tailor the event's engagement techniques and activities to honor the communication norms of the anticipated participants. For example, consider using breakout groups if anticipating participants with preferences for personal and warm communication and high levels of expressiveness. Extra time should be allocated to the activity to ensure that participants have ample time to connect, share and explore the discussion topics. On the other hand, if the anticipated participants are associated with backgrounds less comfortable with self-disclosure and more use of subtle or indirect language, greater levels of participation may be accomplished with open house stations and opportunities for one-on-one conversations with project team members.

Coordinating translation and interpretation

Providing translation and interpretation for community members who may be more comfortable with a language other than English can help support their participation. The facilitator can:

- Coordinate in advance with the interpreters to understand any requests that will make their work more effective, such as reviewing presentation materials, clarifying the intended meaning of any technical terms and making sure that speakers maintain a regular pace of speech.
- Convey the commitment to an effective multi-language event and encourage interpreters to provide suggestions and proactively identify challenges and solutions.
- Involve the interpreters in the practice run and welcome them as part of the team for the event. Test the interpretation equipment and systems as needed.
- Plan for announcements about the availability of interpretation at the beginning of events so that nobody misses any of the program.

During

Conduct the public engagement event according to the logistics plan and agenda while staying flexible and open to adjusting as needed. Focus on the experience of the participants and their involvement. Facilitators should make a point to hear input from all participants and call on people who haven't had a chance to share yet.

Managing nerves

Being at the front of a room and maintaining a productive and inclusive environment during an engagement event is a big responsibility. It is natural to feel nervous in a situation like this. Below are some tips to help feel calmer and stay relaxed.

- Write down and practice the event introduction to reduce the chance of stumbling over words when the event starts.
- Redirecting thoughts from concerns to parts of the event that feel more energizing and meaningful can help the body reinterpret nervousness.
- Connecting with team members and participants for quick chats can help build a positive environment.

Welcoming participants

Facilitation starts as soon as the first participants enter the event space. Staff can welcome participants and orient them to the space. When staff get to know participants and their reasons for attending the engagement event, participants may become more comfortable and open to sharing their ideas.

Productive event guidelines and agreements
Once the event begins, the facilitator should explain to participants the purpose of the event, the desired input that the project team is seeking and any guidelines for participation to make the event productive.

Two commonly used types of guidelines are standard engagement event guidelines and event agreements. Below are their definitions and when to use them.

	Productive Engagement Event Guidelines	**Engagement Event Agreements**
Definition	Standardized event guidelines provide clear expectations for participant behavior and involvement when holding an engagement event.	An agreement that is created between an event facilitator, participants and staff that defines preferences in how an event is run.
When to use	Productive engagement event guidelines are more commonly used than event agreements, especially for larger events where it would take too much time to create agreements.	Engagement event agreements are typically used in smaller event settings, where participants can help fine-tune the statements for their preferences.

Regardless of format, productive engagement event guidelines and engagement event agreements establish standards for how everyone should participate to keep engagement environments constructive, fair and respectful. Simple reminders of the guidelines or agreements can put potentially disruptive behaviors back on a productive track.

The City has standard productive engagement event guidelines, including an explanation of how to introduce them. Facilitators may modify the City's standard guidelines to align with their facilitation style and/or the unique circumstances and needs of the event.

How to use the productive engagement event guidelines

- In larger public engagement events, the facilitator should introduce the guidelines both verbally and in writing at the beginning of the event and explain their purpose. Attendees do not need to formally acknowledge or verbally agree to these guidelines, but the information is shared to create a productive and safe space for all.
    - Example of a productive engagement event guidelines introduction by the facilitator: "*Productive engagement event guidelines help us set expectations for*

participation during this event. They help make sure that all of us in this event have a positive and productive experience. We'll review these guidelines now; please keep them in mind as the event progresses. My role throughout the event is to make sure that we're living up to the guidelines and I'll chime in to keep us on track if we are starting to deviate from them. If you don't feel that you're able to follow these guidelines, we would ask that you consider providing your feedback in a different manner such as through the online survey or by sending us an email."

- In smaller group meetings (10-20 people, e.g. project-specific groups), it is preferable that the group collaborates and makes decisions together to create the engagement event agreements, particularly in a group that will work together over time. For these situations, use the guidelines below as a starting point to discuss and build on.

Each of the five guidelines below should be included on a single presentation slide followed by an explanation by the presenter.

Standard Productive Engagement Event Guidelines	
Guideline	**Speaker Notes**
1. Participate respectfully.	Please ensure all interactions with staff and other community members are respectful. All perspectives are valued, but we ask participants to refrain from making insults and using inflammatory language. We want to ensure that public support or disagreement regarding a participant's point of view does not discourage someone else from participating.
2. Share feedback and perspectives relevant to the topic of the event.	We will do our best to address all questions related to the topic at hand. Unrelated questions or comments will be noted and we will do our best to connect you to the appropriate person or organization.
3. Participate in an active and focused manner.	Being concise, focused and clear will help ensure your thoughts or questions are appropriately captured or addressed.
4. Help involve all participants.	Please share the space to allow others time to provide their input.
5. Help maintain a safe environment.	Please assist in maintaining a safe environment. While we understand that participants may wish to express agreement or disagreement during discussions, it is important to consider the safety of others when doing so. In addition, be sure to keep emergency exits clear and ask permission from City or support staff before moving equipment or furniture.

Care, trust and active listening

When people interact with government, they bring experiences and perceptions that may contribute to them wondering if the project team cares and why they should be trusted.

When community members experience care and trust, there's greater opportunity for sharing project information and having dialogue about questions, concerns, ideas and solutions. When engaging with communities that have been structurally excluded, even greater effort to express care is warranted.

The entire project team can work to establish rapport with community members to express care. After reviewing the concepts below, the project team will likely identify others based on their own experiences and observations.

Concepts to implement care and increase trust include:

- Hospitality: Hosting a public engagement event can be compared to hosting a get-together for family and friends. Part of hosting is considering people's needs and preferences beforehand and monitoring and attending to their comfort during the event.
- Active Listening: Active listening involves going beyond simply hearing the words that another person speaks. It involves carefully listening to what others are saying—not to immediately have a response, but to understand fully what is being said. With community members, active listening helps to convey that staff hear them and value their input. Be attentive, ask open-ended questions, summarize and paraphrase, request clarifications, show empathy and use open body language.
- Nonverbal Behavior: View the *Nonverbal Communication* section to learn strategies for effective communication with the public through attire, body language and music.
- Neutrality: Neutral facilitation can help participants be more comfortable sharing their diverse viewpoints. Facilitators should not provide their personal opinions on processes or project details, regardless of if they are personally in support or opposition.

When to pivot

Each group of participants will have their own unique needs. Consequently, moments may arise where the group is requesting a different approach than what was planned for the engagement event. Having the agility to respond to requests and alter plans demonstrates genuine care and signals intention to authentically engage community members.

For example, if community members are vocalizing discomfort with a workshop format, consider pausing and convening the whole group. Listen to their concerns, take notes and try to incorporate their preferences around how they hope to engage moving forward.

When asked questions that can't be answered at that moment
One of the benefits of public engagement events is community members having the opportunity to ask questions and seek information about things that are important to them. However, sometimes the project team does not have the answer.

Avoid deflecting responsibility or responding in a way that prevents people from receiving the information that they're seeking. Instead, convey that staff will follow up to provide an answer and follow through with the action.

How the team can help
Team members who are not in the role of facilitator still play a big part in accomplishing a productive, inclusive public engagement event. Here are several ways to support and reinforce the facilitator's role.

- During the event, stay within communication range of the facilitator in case they ask for assistance. For example, they may need help distributing materials, adjusting the room set up, troubleshooting audiovisual equipment or bringing out more refreshments.
- Greeters and sign-in table staff can hand out background materials, such as fact sheets, to participants as they enter the event.
- Identify ways to make the space more comfortable for participants and implement any quick adjustments.
- During a Q&A session, point out any participants whom the facilitator may have missed.
- When the facilitator sums up any topics of discussion, notetakers can share any points that the facilitator may not have heard to ensure that all input is recognized and recorded.

After
Hold a meeting including the facilitator and project team to debrief within one to three days of the public engagement event. Exploring what worked well, what could be improved and whether the engagement objectives were met will yield important insights to incorporate into future events. An important part of the debrief is identifying specific action items and responsibilities needed to follow through with commitments made to event participants.

Staff can also share constructive feedback during the event debriefing. Team members may have observed things that the facilitator did not and vice versa.

Finally, all forms of input from participants, including contact information shared for future engagement and any demographic information collected should be documented. Report findings to participants and share how their input influenced project decisions.

Inclusive Graphic Design

Inclusive graphic design is the creation of visual materials that are representative of and accessible to the community members the City serves.

Color Choice for Public Materials helps staff select and apply colors to ensure accessibility, legibility and inclusivity for all users. This is important because content should be visually engaging and easily understood by everyone, including individuals with sight disabilities.

Typographic hierarchy is the practice of organizing text to visually emphasize the most important information, guiding the reader through the document. This is important because it ensures clarity and readability, helping users easily navigate and understand the content by highlighting key messages and providing structure.

Diversity in Images and Graphics provides guidelines for selecting images that authentically represent the city's diverse community, ensuring inclusivity across various cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds and demographics. Diverse graphics help foster a sense of belonging and can help create relatable content that resonates with all community members.

The City's "Our Climate, Our Future" graphic is a good example of diversity in graphics as it highlights people with different ranges of mobility, age groups and demographics. This graphic reflects the inclusivity of the City's climate projects.

For additional guidance on applying these principles relating to color, typography, imagery and inclusive design, refer to the Visual Style Guide.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication conveys a message without using words. Nonverbal communication is a universal form of communication that accounts for a large portion of a message's interpretation. Therefore, understanding nonverbal communication strategies is critical for effectively communicating with the public.

Attire

Attire is a significant factor in first impressions, which are critical when interfacing with the public. The following are attire recommendations for City staff when hosting public engagement events:

- Business attire, such as a dress, slacks, or suit and tie, is appropriate for formal events like TV/radio/podcast interviews and public hearings.
- Business casual attire, such as slacks, T-shirt/shirt and an optional suit jacket, is appropriate for events like workshops and open houses.
- More casual attire, such as a City-branded t-shirt, is suitable for casual events like pop-up events and community office hours.

Body language

Body language refers to nonverbal physical behaviors, expressions and mannerisms used to communicate. When nonverbal behaviors match a person's message, they increase trust, clarity and rapport.

The following are helpful recommendations for body language:

- Be fully present at engagement events.
    - Staff who check their phone or look elsewhere may communicate disengaged behavior and will not pick up on unspoken emotions from the audience.
- Be aware of facial expressions. Greet people with a smile and keep a friendly demeanor at engagement events.
- A slight tilt of the head and gentle nod can show interest and desire to understand.
- Make direct eye contact to indicate engagement in the conversation, trustworthiness and confidence.
    - In some cultures, direct eye contact with unfamiliar people is not used. When in doubt, staff should follow the lead of the person that they are talking to.
- Staff should keep their arms and torso open (avoid crossing arms in front of chest).
    - Make calm gestures to provide emphasis.
        - People of different cultural backgrounds can interpret gestures in various ways. Avoid pointing to the crowd or making hand signals such as a thumbs up or peace sign as they may be interpreted as offensive.

Music

Music has a powerful effect on mood and allows humans to connect. Music with a fast tempo tends to evoke positive emotions while slow-tempo music tends to relax, heighten concentration and boost productivity. Use music to enhance public engagement events by selecting appropriate music for the event's objective and audience. For example, encourage reflection during a working group meeting by choosing calm, slower music.

Paid Advertising

Staff should work with management to allocate any necessary funds for paid advertising to inform or engage the public. Set clear goals for the advertisement (ad) audience demographics and number of viewers. Work with the department's Public Information Officer or Communications Department to create engaging ads that have clear calls to action, monitor the ads and make any necessary adjustments. In addition, work with ad publishers to make sure the ads are reaching the desired stakeholders for the campaign.

Potential ad channels

- Billboards: Billboards are a large-scale type of ad, like posters and banners, that can be seen from far distances. Be aware that billboards and signs are regulated by the San Diego Municipal Code Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 12 and permitting requirements of Chapter 12, Article, 9, Division 8.
- Outdoor and transit ads: Ads that are wrapped onto the side of public transit, benches and transit shelters can reach public transit riders and audiences who are passing by in-person.
- Online ads: Online ads can display on select webpages based on key information gathered from a user's browsing history. This type of advertising can be purchased from services such as Google Ads and Amazon Ads, and can reach many people digitally.
- News organizations: These can be platforms to capture audiences that rely on local news for their information.
    - Webpages: News organizations may post engagement events on their webpages and amplify information through online news articles.
    - Newspapers: Print ads can be an effective way to share information about projects or engagement events to people that do not get their information online.
- Social media: Social media platforms can capture a variety of audiences and offer unique opportunities for paid ads like Facebook event boosts.
- Radio ads: Radio stations and music streaming services can run ads at regularly scheduled intervals.
- Text messages: Platforms such as Constant Contact have the option for short message service, more commonly known as SMS. These ads work by texting contact lists brief informational messages.
- Television (TV): TV ads are another way to reach a wide variety of audiences.

In the Inclusive Public Engagement Guide online survey, which was self-selecting, when asked where they find trustworthy information about what is happening in their community, news platforms (e.g. internet news, newspaper, TV news) were respondents' most popular answer (74), followed by social media (38) and community organizations (23).

Ways to increase effectiveness

- Impressions: Web-based ads are often sold by the number of times an ad is displayed on a selected website or platform. Increasing this number may increase audience reach. For physical ads, place them in areas with high traffic, or in publications that are widely distributed.
- Keywords: Match words or phrases to the ad campaign that is being run. For example, if the campaign is advertising a public engagement event about sea level rise, consider keywords like “beach”, “coast”, or “flooding” to target users who are wanting to learn more about those topics.
- Geo-targeting: Location-based data can be used to send an ad to people who may be interested in a project in a specific location.

Public Speaking

Introduction

Public speaking plays a significant role in public engagement, enabling staff to clearly convey information to the public, which in turn helps the public better understand and provide input on City projects. Public speaking can be approached in three phases: organization, rehearsal and delivery.

Organization

Speakers can outline and prepare for their presentation. Practices to be well-organized include:

- Key points and structure: Develop a key message for the presentation to which all points will be connected back. Structure the presentation with key points first and provide details afterward.
- Simple language: Make sure to use simple, easy-to-understand language.
- Know the audience and context: Tailor the message, presentation style and language to the audience. Understand any time constraints, the political atmosphere and public sentiment toward the topic.

Rehearsal

Rehearsals are chances to get familiar with a presentation and alleviate any stress. Consider the following when rehearsing:

- Practice with a test audience: Reach out to trusted people to conduct a practice run and assess what the audience understood to identify areas of improvement in the speech's structure or delivery. The test audience can help anticipate potential audience questions and develop answers.
- Record the rehearsal: Recording allows a speaker to review their delivery for potential areas of improvement and strengths.
- Get familiar with the location: When possible for in-person engagements, rehearse in the presentation venue. Seeing the location ahead of time familiarizes a speaker with commute time, where their audience will be and any audiovisual tools needed.
- Avoid over-rehearsing: An overly practiced speech or presentation can sound too rehearsed. Be able to follow the general structure of the presentation but also stay flexible.

Delivery

Use the following tips to ensure a strong presentation delivery:

- Voice: This is one of the most fundamental instruments a speaker has.
  - Volume: The speaker needs to be clear and audible for the entire audience. Speak so that the person farthest from the stage can hear what is said and use a microphone if needed.
  - Tone: Try to use a neutral or friendly tone when speaking to convey a sense of professionalism and approachability.
  - Enunciation: Say words as clearly as possible.
  - Filler words: Limit disruptive filler words such as "um" or "like."
- Pacing: Speak at a pace that allows the audience to understand what is being said. Speaking too quickly can jeopardize the public's understanding and complicate the job for any language interpreters.
  - Pauses: Pauses let speakers take a moment to breathe, collect thoughts and reset pacing.
- Eye contact: Eye contact conveys to the audience that the speaker wants to communicate with them and establishes authenticity. Scan across different areas of the audience to avoid singling out any person.
- Body language: Effective public speakers use gestures and open body language to communicate with the audience.

Translation and Interpretation

The City of San Diego utilizes translation and interpretation services to provide meaningful access to public information and engagement opportunities. Translation refers to the process of converting written documents to another language, and interpretation refers to the process of conveying spoken words between languages. Both translation and interpretation should convey the tone, style and intent of the text or speaker while considering differences of culture, dialect and setting.

This section addresses the City's translation and interpretation standards, best practices and how to access services.

Citywide-level language information

Table 14 below shows the different languages spoken among people in the city of San Diego who speak English "less than very well," as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau. These groups consist of at least 1,000 individuals or 5% of the population of the city of San Diego.

Table 14 Different language preference groups in San Diego who speak English "less than very well"[12]

Language Spoken at Home	Individuals who speak English "less than 'very well'"	% of City's Total Population
Spanish	92,386	7.0%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	17,317	1.3%
Vietnamese	16,816	1.3%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	15,674	1.2%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	11,334	0.9%
Other Indo-European languages	8.729	0.7%
Korean	5,003	0.4%
Other and unspecified languages	4,646	0.4%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	4,516	0.4%
Arabic	3,061	0.2%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	1,334	0.1%
German or other West Germanic languages	699	0.1%
Grand Total	181,515	13.8%

Table 14 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables, Table C16001, 2023. This table highlights languages where at least 1,000 Individuals self-reported speaking English "less than 'very well.'"

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Community-level language information

Guidance is provided below on how to retrieve language preference information at the community level. City staff may consult with the Performance & Analytics Department for more detailed information or assistance.

Departments can also work with community-based organizations to identify languages relevant to a community and solicit input on how to make documents culturally appropriate for community members.

- Navigate to the "Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over" Census dataset
- Select the Geos button at the top bar for the list of geographies
- Select 'Census Tracts' > "California" > "San Diego County, California" and then the applicable tracts for your project area.
    - If the Census tracts for the project area are not known, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) publishes a Geographic Boundary Viewer Tool that can be accessed and searched to determine the appropriate Census tracts.
        - Click the "Map Layers" button at the top right of the screen to see the list of different map layers. All the layers will be turned off by default, as indicated by the crossed-out eye icon
        - Click the eye icon next to "Census Boundaries and Zip Codes" to turn on the layer
        - Click the dropdown button to the left of "Census Boundaries and Zip Codes" to see the sub-layer list
        - Click the eye icon next to "Census Tract" to turn on the Census Tract layer
        - Zoom into the community/project area. The Census tract boundaries are designated by a black border. The Census tract number appears at the center of the polygon

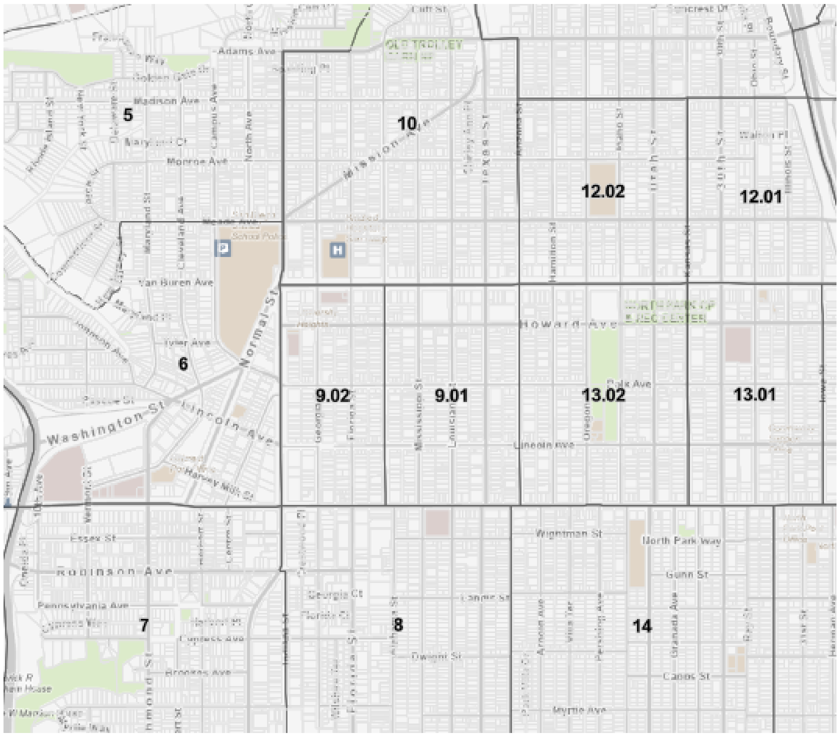


Figure 8: A screen capture of the SANDAG Geographic Boundary Viewer showing Census tract boundaries and numbers

How to access services

To access translation or interpretation services to communicate with people with different language preferences, staff can:

- Assess language needs before hosting public engagement events through pre-engagement surveys or event registration forms that allow registrants to indicate a request for language interpretation services.
  - Prepare translated materials and presentation slides for side-by-side or above-below translation based on anticipated audiences and requests.
- Use the following flyers to help facilitate initial interactions with individuals who have limited English proficiency:
  - We Speak Your Language!
  - I Speak… (Point to Your Language)
  - How to say “one moment, please” in common languages
- Access instant over-the-phone interpretation services through the City’s Language Line.
- The Google™ Translate tool located on the top-right of most City webpages can automatically translate webpages.
- Request translation and interpretation services from the Communications Department.

- Note that flyers, emails and limited tasks may require three to five business days to complete translation based on vendor availability. Presentations may require seven to 10 days' notice, depending on the amount of text. Tasks with more text, such as staff reports, executive summaries and toolkits, generally require two to four weeks' notice. Large documents such as entire plans may require four to six weeks' advance notice.

Best practices for public engagement translation and interpretation

Translation

- For translation, start with clear and concise English text with minimal acronyms and jargon that may be challenging to translate.
- Translate the name of the initiative or program on first reference in text or materials.
  - Optionally, include a short explanation of any branded program names in parentheses if needed for clarity.
  - Do not translate logos. Keep the logo in its original language.
- Staff should advertise engagement opportunities in the appropriate language(s) of a project area.
  - For example, when advertising a Spanish survey, use "¡Llene la encuesta!" instead of "Take the Spanish survey!".

Interpretation

- Brief the interpreter by providing presentation materials, clarifying any technical terms that are essential to the discussion and scheduling a dry run with the interpreter when possible.
- Allow only one person to speak at a time so that their words can be interpreted clearly.
- Speak at a regular rate of speech so that the interpreters can provide a clear and meaningful interpretation of the information presented. When reading from a written speech or presentation, some people tend to talk faster than their normal rate of speech.
- If there will be timed public comment, any speaker requesting interpretation should be given double the time limit to allow sufficient time for interpretation.
- The ADA requires the City to communicate effectively with people with disabilities by providing aids and services such as a qualified sign language interpreter or assistive listening devices when requested. See Administrative Regulation 96.20 for more information.

Trauma-informed Engagement

What is it?
Trauma-informed engagement is the practice of understanding and acknowledging the complexities of trauma while conducting public engagement to better support community members' participation in decision-making processes.

Trauma is a physical and mental response to distressing events. It can include both individual and collective experiences of distressing events. Intergenerational trauma refers to the cumulative trauma transmitted across generations, often resulting from the structural exclusion of community members. There are many types of traumas that people may experience, and their symptoms may display differently. Trauma has long-lasting impacts on individuals and communities and may reduce their ability to engage with the City.

Trauma-informed public engagement allows City staff to meaningfully engage with the public and reframe perceived behaviors with a trauma-informed perspective. With these trauma-informed approaches in mind, City staff can strive to conduct inclusive public engagement that builds stronger and more trusting relationships with community members.

Reframing perceived behaviors
Trauma-informed engagement begins with recognizing potential trauma symptoms and reframing the behaviors before taking an informed approach. The following scenarios display examples of this process.

- *Appears angry*
  A community member starts yelling at staff during a pop-up event. This person may appear angry, but this behavior could have resulted from a loud, busy environment triggering this person. To address this situation, staff could acknowledge the person's frustration and suggest discussing their concerns at a different time or in a quieter location, if safe to do so. See the *Conflict Management* section for more.
- *Appears entitled*
  A person may continuously email different City staff and ask for updates on when the results of a survey will be released. This may appear as entitled behavior, but this may be caused by the person's trauma-based need for transparency and control, particularly if they have had difficulties reaching staff in the past. Staff can exercise patience and provide a prompt, clear answer on the expected timeline to reassure the person.

- *Appears inconsiderate*
  Without a trauma-informed approach, staff may view a person who is repeatedly late for an advisory group meeting as inconsiderate. However, this behavior may be a result of the person struggling with early meetings due to having constant disrupted sleep as a symptom of their trauma. Staff could work with the person to give them as much notice about meetings as possible and a helpful form of reminder.

- *Appears uninterested*
  Another example of applying trauma-informed engagement is working with a person who appears uninterested at a public engagement event. This behavior could be caused by a negative experience at a past engagement event. For example, if the person had previously submitted feedback about a project in their community but never heard back, they may be indifferent when asked to share input again. In response, staff can explain to the person how their input will be used and ask to include them in the contact list so they can stay informed as the project advances.

- *Avoids providing personal information*
  A participant at a workshop refuses to sign in or provide demographic information, which may appear uncooperative. This behavior could stem from fears about surveillance, immigration enforcement or mistrust in government. Staff should consider input options that allow for anonymous participation, such as comment forms, and clearly explain that providing demographic information is optional. Staff can explain that this information is used to understand who the City is reaching, who we may be missing and to measure progress toward creating participation opportunities for everyone.

GET INVOLVED WITH THE CITY!

City of San Diego 101

What does the City do?

The City of San Diego as the local government takes care of everyday services to support the daily lives of community members. The City maintains public spaces like streets, parks and libraries and oversees essential services, like fire-rescue and police. The City also develops initiatives in the form of citywide or community-level initiatives that work to enhance San Diego and make it a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone.

What does the City work on?

City departments bring forward items for the City Council's consideration that address a specific issue, achieve particular goals or implement policies. These involve allocated resources such as funding and personnel, are politically supported and include participation from members of the public so that the City can make decisions informed by community members' perspectives.

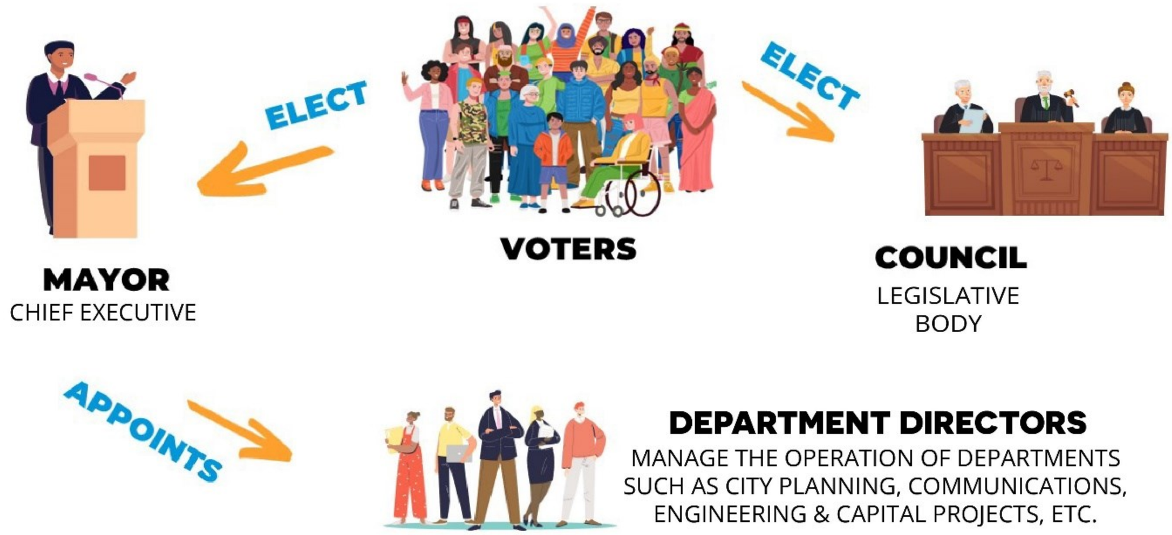
The types of initiatives that you can provide input on are generally described in Table 15:

Table 15 Types of Initiatives

Initiative	Description	Examples
Plans	***Strategic or Action Plans*** **-** Establish foundational strategy, overarching goals and actions to address the citywide issues and needs	• *Citywide Strategic Plan* – Action-oriented plan that outlines the City's priorities and strategies to better serve San Diegans • *Creative City Cultural Plan* – A 10-year framework to advance arts, culture and creativity for the benefit of San Diegans and the transborder region • *Climate Action Plan (CAP)* – Outlines strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emission and create a more sustainable City
	Policy Plans or Land Use Plans - Provide long-term goals and policy direction for city growth and development	• *The General Plan* – Provides Citywide policy guidance for the future growth and development of the City • *Community Plans* – Refines the Citywide policy guidance for the future growth and development for a community plan area
	Master Plans – Aligns guidance for different programs that are focused on the same Citywide goals	• *Parks Master Plan* – Envisions an interconnected and equitable Citywide parks system that allows for the delivery of new recreational experiences and parks where they are need the most and will be used by the most people • *Mobility Master Plan* – Envisions a balanced, equitable and sustainable mobility system that combines multiple programs into a plan to prioritize mobility improvement projects

Initiative	Description	Examples
Policies	High-level directives that guide decision-making across the City	• *Council Policies* – City policy statements adopted by the City Council that provide direction regarding various topics such as the budget, processes to prioritize infrastructure, City contracts, etc.
Programs	Defined services or activities aimed at achieving specific outcomes for the community	• *Parks After Dark* – Offers a series of free, outdoor community events that activate public parks and keep neighborhoods safe • *Mattress Recycling* Program – Free mattress collection available to help combat illegal dumping and recycle used mattresses
Regulations	Rules or laws that state what can or cannot be done, or how something must be done	• *San Diego Municipal Code* – Contains the laws of the City and is updated by the City Council
Capital Projects	Physical infrastructure	• *Capital Improvements Program (CIP)* - New bikeways, libraries, street improvements and water and sewer facilities

What is your role in the City and why does it matter?



Role of the public

San Diegans have a direct say in shaping the city they live in! When you vote for the Mayor and City Council or City ballot measures, you help shape everything from how libraries and recreation centers will serve your community, to new infrastructure projects, to how the City will tackle climate change. But voting isn't the only way to have a say — there are many other ways to share thoughts on how to make San Diego the best place to live, play and work. Want more parks? Better streets? A say in local job creation? Your input helps make it happen!

City decision-makers

The City of San Diego's government is made up of elected leaders, including a mayor and City Council. The City operates under a strong mayor system in which the Mayor serves as chief executive for the City. Under this form of government, the Mayor oversees all City departments and operations, except independent offices[13] such as the City Attorney's Office. The Mayor serves a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms.

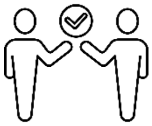
The City Council serves as the City's legislative body, enacting laws, approving budgets and setting policies. The City Council consists of nine elected Councilmembers representing each of the nine City Council districts. Councilmembers also serve a maximum of two consecutive four-year terms.

[13] Independent offices include Independent Budget Analyst, Ethics Commission, City Auditor, City Clerk, City Attorney, Personnel Director.

The Mayor and City Council work together to make decisions for the City. They listen to residents' concerns and use their understanding of San Diego's unique needs to set policies and priorities that help the City thrive.

Why should you participate?

To be informed about the changes and decisions being made that affect San Diego's communities.



To advocate for decisions that reflect the needs and values of you and your community.

To advocate for the effective use of limited public resources.

You know the benefits. Now how can you get involved?
The City offers a variety of easily accessible opportunities for the public to engage in important community matters. Sharing your opinions helps decision-makers understand how their decisions will affect your community. Sharing input is completely free and requires only a small investment of time, yet can prove to be time well-spent.

Avenues to help shape the future of the City include:

- Public hearings: These are formal meetings of the City Council, Council Committees, Planning Commission or other advisory bodies where City staff presents information and the public can express their opinions about a proposed project before a decision is made. Community members can find public hearings by searching the City's Legislative Calendar and checking the City Bulletin of Public Notices. See "Share your thoughts at public hearings" below to learn more.
- City staff: City staff can be an initial point of contact when you have questions or want to get in touch. These can include your assigned Community Planner, Council District Representative or a Project Manager/Engineer assigned to a capital improvement project.

Here's how to reach City staff effectively:

- ➢ Send an email: Keep it short and to the point whenever possible. Clearly state your question or comment.
- ➢ Pick up the phone: A quick call can help clarify details. Calling the Office of the City Clerk can help direct you to the right place if you don't know where to start. Leave a clear voicemail including contact information for how to reach you if they do not answer.
- ➢ Attend public meetings & hearings: Attend and provide input during public comment. Submit written comments ahead of time so staff and the decision-maker can review and consider them.

- Planning groups: Join a planning group to make more formal recommendations to City decision-makers about certain development projects in your community and other long-range planning and zoning actions.
- Public engagement events: The City often shares information and collects input at in-person community events like workshops, public meetings and pop-up events. There may also be opportunities to participate or attend remotely.
- City webpages: Access a department's webpage to see their services, contact information, latest news about projects and how to get involved.
- Volunteer: Are you interested in volunteer opportunities or participating on a working group, board or commission? Let the City know that you are interested by filling out an online form. Boards and commissions are made up of community volunteers that are responsible for advising the Mayor, City Council and City departments on various topics such as youth issues, transportation, climate action and promoting arts and culture.
- Newsletters: Stay connected with the City! Sign up for regular newsletters from the Mayor, Councilmembers and City departments.

Share your thoughts at public hearings

Public hearings are your chance to speak up on important topics like parks, housing and public projects. The City Council generally meets twice a week—usually on Mondays and Tuesdays—to make decisions on projects that shape San Diego's communities.

During public comment periods, you can share your thoughts directly with City decision-makers. Whether you're supporting a project, voicing concerns or just staying informed, your participation matters. Learn more about how to join and participate in City Council hearings.

Remember that at public hearings:

- You get a chance to speak when it is public comment time.
- You can share your support or opposition for an item on the agenda or share general thoughts during non-agenda public comment.

If you have a specific interest or concern, the Council also has committees with different responsibility areas, such as Land Use and Housing, Active Transportation and Infrastructure, or Community and Neighborhood Services. Each committee meets once or twice a month, so check the legislative calendar for a schedule of their meetings if you would like to attend.

Prior to Hearing

- **Check the Agenda** – Available online or at City Hall at least 72 hours before the hearing. This outlines what will be discussed. For a simpler overview, check out the Summary located on the button to the right, which breaks everything down into an easy-to-read format.
- **Review Materials** – On the agenda, click the item you're interested in to review staff reports, presentations, and other reference materials.
- **Prepare Your Comment** – You may choose to submit your comment online or in-person at the hearing. Preparing your comment for an in-person hearing can help keep it clear and concise.
- **Plan Ahead** – Hearings can run long, and exact start times for items can vary.
- **Decide Virtual or In-person Attendance** – Council agendas will include information for how to participate remotely, either by calling or joining Zoom. In-person Council hearings are held at the City Council Chambers at City Hall (202 C Street, San Diego, CA 92101).

During Hearing

- Sign Up to Speak **During the Live Hearing** – If in-person, fill out a speaker slip and submit it at the dais to be called for public comment.
- **Listen for the Item** – The City Clerk will announce when public comment is open and the order in which people will get called on to speak.
- **Time Limits Apply** – Usually 1-2 minutes per speaker. Others in-person may donate time (up to 15 minutes in some cases).

After Hearing

- **Archive** – Video recordings and meeting minutes are available online after the hearing.

The final takeaway

There are plenty of ways to get involved and stay involved with the City — from sending an email to your elected officials about a matter that you care about to participating in a local board or commission throughout the year, the City benefits from hearing your thoughts.

Keep up with hearing agendas, City newsletters and official webpages to help you know when important topics are being discussed so that you can participate effectively.

However, no matter how you participate, keep an open mind; there may be others who want to share different perspectives or concerns that you might disagree with. Also, remember to keep comments respectful. Comments are most effective when they are focused on the issue at hand.

Your active participation means you help decide what happens in San Diego. Share your input with the City and make a real difference!