Community Engagement Framework

City of Hillsboro

OVERVIEW

The City of Hillsboro is one of Oregon's most diverse and dynamic cities, with a population of over 108,000 people. In 2022, the Hillsboro City Council adopted the following guiding principle:

We value accessible community engagement. Be intentional in our outreach to engaging all community members in policy-making by designing safe and accessible engagement opportunities, providing clear expectations, and removing barriers to engagement.

City Council also made Community Engagement and Outreach a citywide priority. This framework was developed to demonstrate the City's current and ongoing commitment to engaging the community in a meaningful and equitable way.

Meaningful and equitable community engagement not only provides City Council with an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with community members, but ensures that decision makers are informed of diverse community needs and aspirations to make better decisions. It allows City staff to foster a culturally inclusive community and intentionally listen to historically marginalized community members to integrate equity into the fabric of the City's delivery of public services.

Transparent and trusting relationships are central to community engagement and should guide the planning of all phases of engagement, including what happens before and after staff engage with community members. Removing barriers to engagement and elevating voices of historically and currently excluded communities, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) is an integral step to achieving effective community engagement.

There is no one-size fits all approach for community engagement. This framework serves as a guide to all City of Hillsboro staff for planning, strategizing, implementing, and evaluating community engagement efforts to fit different project needs. It aims to develop a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered.

City of Hillsboro's Equity Statement

The City of Hillsboro is committed to equity. Equity work aims to remove barriers and eliminate social and economic disparities by centering those who have been excluded from the decision-making process. Equity is the pursuit of equal outcomes.

We acknowledge that equity, particularly racial equity, is essential to providing exceptional public services — and to creating an inclusive and safe work environment for everyone.

The City recognizes that people of color and other communities continue to be marginalized and excluded – both intentionally and unintentionally — from constructing the institutions that govern our lives and the services we depend on to protect our health, safety, and well-being. We further acknowledge that structural and cultural barriers impact access to, and representation in, City government.

The City of Hillsboro has a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging for all people. We must be inclusive in developing and implementing policies to ensure that City services are responsive to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other individual identities.

We acknowledge that without an intentional focus on equity, we will continue to perpetuate and deepen inequality.

To realize our mission and core values, the City of Hillsboro commits to integrating equity into the fabric of our organization and the delivery of public services in pursuit of equal, fair, and just outcomes for all.

City of Hillsboro's Core Values:

- Excellence in Public Service

- Respect for Diverse Voices and Ideas

- Responsiveness in Customer Service

- Tradition of Reliability

- Stewardship of the Public Trust

- Leadership with Ethics and Integrity

- Culture of Teamwork and Communication

- Emphasis on Innovation

What Community Engagement Is

Community engagement is a collaborative process of having two-way dialogue with community members to address issues that impact them. It provides a platform for people to voice their opinions and influence the decision-making process. Community engagement is a valuable link between City Council, City staff, and the community. Inclusive community engagement processes create a shared vision for a City's future and the outcome will reflect the community's values and achieve long-term and sustainable relationships.

Community engagement is a "bottom-up approach" that requires listening to local communities and recognizing the value in each voice. It requires a much-needed change in existing systems of power and privilege where programs and initiatives are designed using a "top-down" approach.

What Community Engagement Is NOT

Community engagement should not be confused with communication and outreach. Communication and outreach tend to be one-way processes that are focused on disseminating information to the public despite the occasional feedback that may be collected through social media or the website.

True community engagement is about collaborating with and empowering communities and NOT only informing or surveying them or asking for their input on programs/projects/initiatives. Community engagement is NOT community consultations that only seek advice but do not recognize the decision-making role of local communities.

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a valuable link between City Council, City staff, and the community. Not engaging with community members leads to lack of trust, less satisfaction with government performance, and less acceptance of government decisions, which in turn will slow down processes and delay completion of projects. Community engagement offers a range of benefits:

- Improves City's decision-making process by considering a range of perspectives, experiences, and knowledge
- Ensures that voices of historically marginalized community members have a place at the table
- Creates a shared purpose and a more connected and informed community
- Encourages greater public participation
- Reduces misconceptions and misinformation about City projects and initiatives
- Identifies and addresses existing and potential concerns
- Empowers community members to influence the decision-making process

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

The Hillsboro community is made up of residents, businesses, visitors, elected officials, City staff, and people who identify with Hillsboro. While the population of Hillsboro is roughly 106,000, people who work, learn, or play in the City of Hillsboro are also part of the community.

Explore the demographics of the Hillsboro community by using ArcGIS Community Analyst maps which include over 600 different population demographic variables. Information on Hillsboro from the Census Bureau:

- Communities of Color: 42.2%
- Languages Other Than English Spoken At Home: 30.9%
- Poverty Rate: 9.3%
- Cost Burdened Households: 31.3%
- Disability: 10.1%

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK GOALS

- **Proactive approach –** Initiate two-way dialogue with community members and ensure that staff have a clear understanding of meaningful and equitable engagement.
- **Do not assume people know –** Use terms, explanations, and language that can be easily understood. Help everyone understand constraints and the variety of perspectives.
- **Diversify opportunities –** Provide frequent, creative, and convenient ways for community members to access information and provide feedback. Use a mix of digital platforms, printed materials, and in-person methods.
- **Meet people where they are at –** Take advantage of opportunities to meet community members where they gather. Utilize a mix of in-person and online techniques and methods.
- **Collaborate with CBOs –** Consult with community-based organizations and culturally specific organizations as they have deep networks in the communities they serve, and they have a high degree of trust among members of those communities.
- **Increase community interest –** Raise community's awareness of City projects and initiatives and focus on how the project impacts community members.
- **Build community trust –** Involve community members in the early stages of the City's decision processes and ensure that information received through community engagement efforts and its impact is reported back to the community.
- **Be transparent –** Ensure that engagement activities are conducted in an open and transparent manner.
- **Evaluate and Evolve –** Evaluate engagement plans and pursue new ideas for future projects.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Use this process model as a guide to plan, strategize, implement, and evaluate community engagement efforts. Although these seven steps are sequential, they will overlap with each other throughout the process:

1. **Outline** Project
2. **Determine** Engagement Level
3. **Identify** Stakeholders
4. **Plan** Engagement Roadmap
5. **Engage** the Community
6. **Evaluate** & Make Decision
7. **Report** back & Reflect
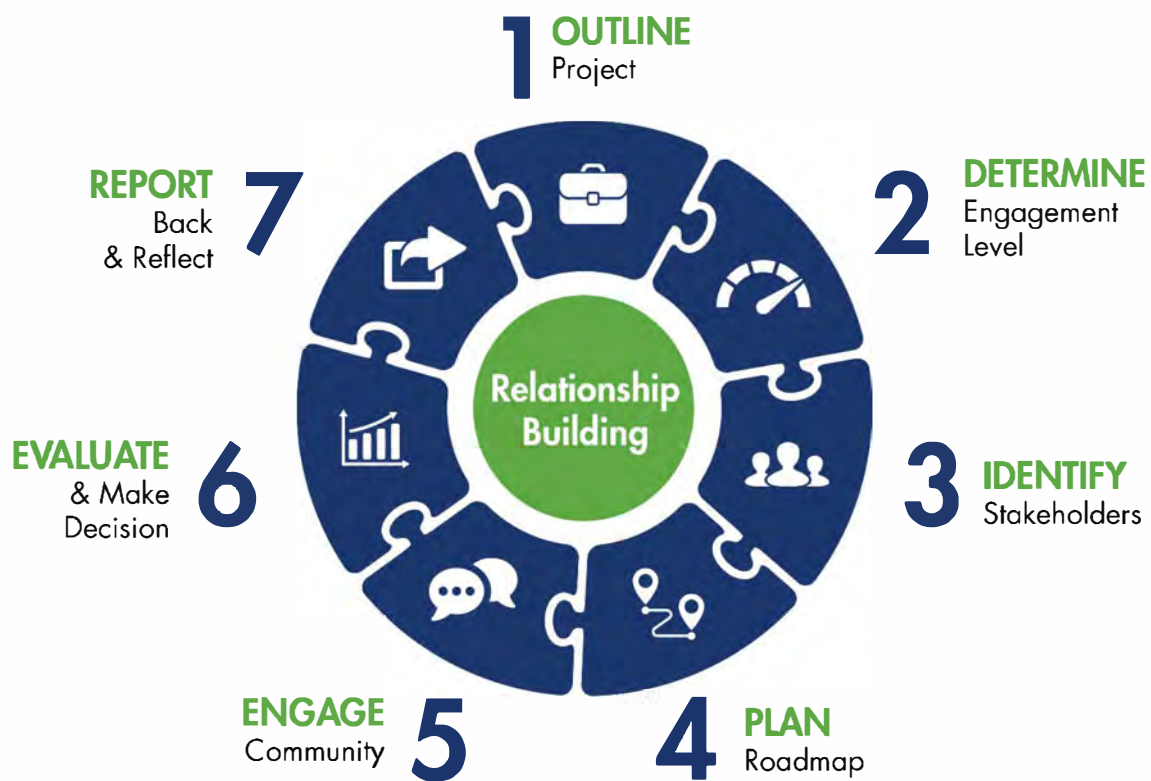
Relationships are **central** to **community engagement**. It is important to build and sustain transparent and trusting relationships with communities throughout the engagement process. Relationships take time and effort and should be prioritized at every step of the process.

1. **OUTLINE** PROJECT

The Subject Matter Expert (SME) develops the foundation of the project that prepares them for meaningful and equitable community engagement. This planning sets the stage for the engagement process and needs to be guided with a racial equity lens and with multiple perspectives involved. This will ensure that decisions will be made through engagement, the most impacted communities are involved, biases are addressed, and that community trust is built early in the engagement process. The Community Engagement Manager, DEI Manager, and Communications Division Manager are resources to help throughout the process.

- **Determine goals and objectives of the project** – What does the project seek to do for the community? What are the anticipated impacts (both positive and negative) at the neighborhood level? What about at the citywide level? What does a successful outcome look like? How will we measure, report, and celebrate success?

- **Determine why community input is important in the project outcome** – What is it that you want people to do? Get new ideas? Obtain feedback? Approval? What are the possible consequences/outcomes (if any) of not engaging the community?

- **Consider who will be impacted by the project** – What is the current level of community awareness about the project and its impacts? Will specific communities be prioritized?

- **Identify decision-making points and areas of influence** –Who will be making which decisions at what point in the process?

- **Identify constraints within decision-making** – Are there any legal or financial limitations? Are there any time constraints? What are the biggest issues expected to come up?

- **Define roles and responsibilities of City staff and departments** – Who has overall management responsibility of public participation? Who has experience in community engagement and what was effective or ineffective in similar projects?

- **Identify external resources important to the process** – Are you hiring a consultant? Which City partners have expertise in this project?

- **Identify level of community interest in the project** – Have community members voiced interest, concerns, or opposition to the project?

2. **DETERMINE** ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) developed The Spectrum of Public Participation to help organizations define the public's role in any public engagement process. The Spectrum is a tool to help project leaders identify the level of influence community members will have over the final decisions being made. The City of Hillsboro currently engages with community members through the "Inform" and "Consult" levels. **To achieve City Council's engagement priority, community engagement opportunities should strive for "Collaborate" level of engagement but "Involve" at minimum**. Project leaders can then use this level to create engagement strategies, messaging, and select appropriate engagement activities or methods.

	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
	One-Way Communication	**Two-Way Communication**			
				Deliberative Communication	
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
Promise To The Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

3. **IDENTIFY** STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders are people who would be impacted by the project. While the broader public should always be informed and included on a project, stakeholder groups are directly or indirectly impacted by the outcomes of the project and should be specifically engaged. Prioritize engaging BIPOC and historically and currently marginalized communities, including community members with limited English-language proficiency.

To identify stakeholders, do some research and learn about the different communities and groups in Hillsboro that will be impacted by the project:

- Who in your immediate network can provide you with contacts to follow up with?
- Who are people who may not have knowledge about the project, but will likely be the most impacted by its outcomes?
- Who is missing or who is hard to reach? Examine demographics and socioeconomic data.
- Who are your internal stakeholders? City Council, City department staff, Boards and Commissions.

To find specific densities of people, explore **ArcGIS Community Analyst** maps which include over 600 different population demographic variables.

Sample list of potential external stakeholders:

- Community-based organizations
- Small Businesses
- Chamber of Commerce
- Faith-based organizations
- Academic Institutions
- Homeowners and/or renters
- Community Development Corporations
- Library users
- Recreational facility users
- Social services organizations
- Health services organizations
- Youth organizations
- Media
- Environmental Groups
- Interest Groups like Migrant Worker Groups

Identifying Specific Stakeholders

- **Residents –** Who are they exactly? Are they residents living around the project? Are they homeowners or renters? Are they seniors?
- **Businesses –** What kind of businesses do you mean? Are you referring to small businesses around the project? Are those small businesses owned by BIPOC community members?
- **Non-Profits –** Identify the list of community-based organizations that work with the target populations you want to hear from.

Ways to Connect with Stakeholders

- **Faith-based Organizations –** The best way to get in touch with leaders of faith-based organizations is to attend their services or schedule a meeting after a service. People who are active in faith-based groups may also be very active in community affairs and one way to reach them is through their leaders.

- **Small Businesses –** Local small businesses make great partners. Leaving flyers at their location can be helpful and restaurants can serve as a good venue to hold small community meetings.

- **Community Health Centers –** Most have a strong connection with the local community and are known as a safe and trusted place not only for medical advice, but for social services as well.

- **Fitness & Family Centers –** Centers like YMCA have missions that falls in line with making places a better place to live and work and can be potential partners

- **Colleges/Universities –** An excellent place to make contacts and meet people that are interested in community projects. Connect with related departments, research institutions, student groups, career services, government or public affairs, community service office, and school newspaper.

4. **PLAN** ROADMAP

Create an internal and external timeline. Start with the final target dates and work backward to create a timeline. **Meaningful and equitable engagement takes time**. Start planning early and make sure to build in enough time in your timeline to work on building relationships.

Final Decision → Community feedback presented to decision-makers → Community feedback analyzed → Community engagement events → Informing community about upcoming project

Consider Barriers to Engagement:

- **Digital Capability**: People with lower digital capability may not be able to participate in online community engagement and communications efforts effectively. Make sure to offer alternative engagement methods.

- **Lack of Awareness**: People who are not already engaged in local government are not always aware of community projects going on around them or aware that they can have a say in how these projects were shaped. Make sure to reach out to stakeholders ahead of the engagement activities to inform them of the project and the upcoming engagement opportunities.

- **Language**: There is a sizeable community in Hillsboro with limited English Proficiency. Consider translating materials to other languages. Explore **ArcGIS Community Analyst** maps to identify what languages may be needed.

- **Financial Strain**: It may not be feasible for low-income individuals to take time away from work to attend a face-to-face meeting, or the costs of travel could be too high. Consider offering stipends for participation, supervised play, transportation, and food for in-person engagements.

Identify, organize, and coordinate engagement activities appropriate for the project. Activities should seek to be dynamic, adaptive, and responsive to community needs and circumstances.

We often see that the residents participating in public meetings are a narrow slice of the Hillsboro community. Consider partnering with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or community organizers to better reach and engage a broader cross section of residents. CBOs and community organizers have deep networks in the communities they serve, and they have a high degree of trust among members of those communities. They play a critical role in the effort to increase community engagement and offer equitable opportunities for marginalized and under-represented communities to participate in City processes. CBOs and community organizers have access to hard-to-reach sectors of the community and can encourage them to attend and actively participate in community conversations and other engagement opportunities.

Ways to Reach People Where They Are

- **Festivals –** Meet general public, meet organizations and businesses that could be potential partners.

- **Saturday Market and Tuesday Night Market –** Engage with a cross section of the community.

- **Community-Based Organization Celebrations –** Sponsor CBOs' annual celebrations and meet diverse community members at their events.

Examples of Community Engagement Activities and Tools

Engage Hillsboro Online Platform*

COH Website

Inform | Consult | Involve | Collaborate | Empower

One-Way Communication

Two-Way Communication

Deliberative Communication

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
• Fact Sheet • Website • Newsletter • Brochure • Utlity bill insert • Flyer • Direct Mail Letter • Direct Mail Postcards • Doorhangers • Email • Social media • Open house • Presenations to clubs & organizations • Newspapers and ethnic media • Press Releases • Videos	• Public comment • Focus group • Survey • Interview • Public meeting • Tour • Fairs • Events	• Workshop • Deliberate polling • Study circles	• Advisory Goup • Task Force • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

Remember that community members choose to receive information in different ways, and there is no one-size-fits-all.

- Use a variety of activities and tools.
- Use as many avenues as you can to reach the most amount of people.
- Seek lessons learned from other department staff who had successful engagements

Engage Hillsboro Online Platform

The City of Hillsboro recently launched a new online engagement platform. With Engage Hillsboro, community members can provide input and feedback on current and upcoming projects – anytime and anywhere – on their phone, tablet, or computer. They can:

- Engage through surveys, idea boards, interactive maps, meetings, and events
- Participate in discussions and hear what neighbors are saying
- Get progress updates on projects and initiatives
- Communicate directly with City staff

*Engage Hillsboro Online Platform vs City of Hillsboro Website

Not all projects should be posted on Engage Hillsboro. Consider the following questions and have a conversation with the Community Engagement Manager.

If a decision is still being shaped and you want to engage community members in a two-way dialogue → **Use Engage Hillsboro**

If a decision has been made, or there are no opportunities to influence the outcome, or you just want to share information with the public to keep them informed of a project → **Use Website**

Engage Hillsboro Tools

Reach out to the Community Engagement Manager or Communications Division Manager to learn about the different Engage Hillsboro tools and widgets and how your project can benefit from this online platform. Engage Hillsboro offers three levels of engagement tools:

- **Open Environment Tools**: Allows participants to engage with each other, and all comments are visible to the public.

- **Mixed Environment Tools**: Allows participants to see the contributions of others, but there is little opportunity for online conversations to take place. Some data may be visible to the public.

- **Controlled Environment Tools**: Gives you the opportunity to collect feedback but it is not visible to the public unless you decide to make it so.

EngagementHQ Tools Spectrum
Managing your project communications

BANG THE TABLE engagementHQ

Open environment
Participants can engage with each other. Comments, images and ideas are visible to the community.

Mixed environment
Participants can see other contributions. However, there is little peer-to-peer interaction. Some data may be visible to the public, other data is just accessible by admin.

Controlled environment
Participants cannot engage with each other. Data is stored in the backend and only accessible by admin.

FORUM   IDEAS   PLACES   STORIES   GUESTBOOK   Q&A   QUICK POLL   SURVEYS

Understanding what you want to learn from the community and how you want to learn it will be a key factor in determining which tools you should utilize.

Open Environment Tools

Forums – Allow the community to interact with each other in threaded conversations. It is an open discussion tool where participants can agree and disagree on other people's comments.

Ideas – These virtual post-it notes are a way for the community to share what inspires them. Consider it a brainstorming tool. Ideas can include images or media.

Places – Allows gathering feedback and photos directly on a map with a simple pin drop. It allows participants a fun way to engage and see their contribution on a map.

Mixed Environment Tools

Stories – Help your community better understand, empathize, and relate to others and your project. This is a tool to share "lived experiences" in relation to an issue or event. Stories can be interactive and can include images or media to support context. Use this tool to understand communities needs and desires.

Guestbook – Simple, streamlined, and moderated space for your community to upload comments. Comments are moderated to manage what appears publicly, so your engagement stays on topic.

Q&A – Receive questions in a managed space that accommodates your public or private responses. This tool is great for building a community knowledge bank of questions.

Closed Environment Tools

Quick Poll – Ask a single question and get immediate insight with this quick and targeted tool. Polls are an easy way to activate simple engagement with a single question

Surveys – This This is one of Engagement HQ's most commonly utilized tools. Encourage your community to voice their opinions using a variety of question types and rich media in a convenient and guided way. Use surveys when you are trying to quantify collected information. For qualitative responses, use the Forum tool.

5. **ENGAGE** THE COMMUNITY

Now that a community engagement roadmap has been defined, the engagement journey starts! Make sure to collect voluntary contact information (name and email) from community members to keep them informed of how their feedback impacted the decision. Inviting community members who engaged in the process to public meetings where decisions will be made is important to building trust with community.

It is essential that individuals who engage with the community reflect the communities highly impacted, or have connections to communities, or receive sufficient Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training.

Messaging

- Craft messages that will engage the audience
- Use plain language
- Appeal to people's self interest
- Tailor your message for each stakeholder group

Things you should keep in mind when working with community members

- Listen to understand
- Relate to people
- Ask how they like to engage
- Expose people to different things
- Be specific and set clear targets
- Keep their self-interests in mind
- Follow-up and connect people with appropriate staff

Ways to Build Trust

- Be prepared with accurate information
- Frequently provide and update information
- Be honest
- Empathize with feelings and fears
- Admit any complications, risks, or uncertainties
- Acknowledge power dynamics and inconveniences placed on the public
- Take action when you can
- Invite community to Council meetings where decisions will be made

6. **EVALUATE** & MAKE DECISION

This phase is about accountability and transparency with community members who invested time and energy in the project. It also deepens relationships with community members and groups and builds trust in the long run.

- Collect and evaluate data received from the public. Decide in advance how data will be collected. Will you be using spreadsheets, online surveys, graphs/charts, etc. Your method will depend on how the data will be used by the decision-makers. Will Council need to see each direct quote, or is a summary of opinions a better way to present the information?
- Evaluate whether engagement goals and objectives were met and if further engagement is needed
- Check the list of stakeholders and ensure that you engaged as many as possible
- Review demographic information of participants to ensure that you reached the targeted audience
- Weigh input from community groups to ensure that input from the most impacted communities has the greatest influence
- If you partnered with CBOs or community organizers, consider inviting them to present findings to decision-makers

7. **REPORT** BACK & REFLECT

The relationships made during a project are invaluable. Capture participant contacts in a database and organize them by stakeholder group. Make sure to enter relevant notes about the person's expertise or contributions so other staff can benefit from engaging these participants.

When community members take the time and effort to give us their feedback, we need to make sure we let them know how valuable they are and how much we appreciate their effort. Reporting back to community members is an integral part of the process and should not be overlooked. We often hear that community members do not engage because they believe their voices will not be heard or taken in consideration in the decision-making process. Let our community members know they were heard.

Sharing this information by using the same tools used to inform and engage is the first step but make an intentional effort to reach project participants in their preferred communication method. If they provided their email address in the engagement process, send them an email with the results of the engagement or direct them to where they can find the results.

Include the following messaging:

- We heard from you….
- Engagement outcomes and decisions made
- How their feedback was considered and rationale for how decisions were made
- Logic behind feedback that was not implemented and ways that feedback may be addressed in the future
- Invitation to stay engaged with the City of Hillsboro (Engage Hillsboro)

Reflect on Engagement Process

Evaluate the engagement methods used for the project and consider how the process can be refined in the future.

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- What could've been done differently?
- Did anything come up that wasn't expected?
- Engage Hillsboro analysis of engagement
- Attendance at focus groups and public meetings