

Replacement Attachment A - 5/16/24

CITY OF SAN JOSE Community Engagement Draft Report

Created by the Community Engagement Working
Group

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION – WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

The mission of the City of San José is to provide quality public services, facilities, and opportunities that create, sustain, and enhance a safe, livable, and vibrant community for its diverse residents, businesses, and visitors. In doing this work, we are constantly making decisions. We make decisions about how to provide services and programs, regulate private development, build infrastructure, and plan for the future. We identify issues and find solutions to them. Many of our decision-making and solution-finding processes involve the public – including nearly all projects that go to City Council or an appointed commission for approval.

What is community engagement?

For purposes of this Framework, “community engagement” is the two-way dialogue between the City and the public that informs our decision-making and solution development. It seeks insights, feedback, and ideas and incorporates that qualitative data into the process. “Public outreach” is typically the one-way distribution of information, including invitations to participate in decision-making processes. Community engagement is different than the interaction with the public when delivering services.

Community engagement is also a key component of equitable program and service delivery because it allows City staff to vet both our understanding of the problem we are trying to solve and our proposed solutions with the people for whom these programs and services were designed. It provides the valuable qualitative feedback that helps to provide context to any quantitative data departments are using, and it’s an important aspect City Council members always look for. After all, despite whatever training, experience, and education City staff have, we are not experts in what it is to lead someone else’s life.

Public outreach and community engagement are intertwined and can take many forms. **There is no one-size-fits-all approach.** Designing a process for each project/program requires an understanding of the unique context surrounding that particular project or program. However, there are many resources that provide guidance on the art and science of outreach and engagement.

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) *Spectrum of Public Participation* is a useful tool for understanding the variety of ways the City can involve the public in a decision-making process. It ranges from Inform (sharing information about the process) on the left side to Empower (putting decision-making in the hands of the public) on the right side. There is no universally correct level to aim for on the Spectrum. In fact, for a given process, the place on the Spectrum can vary across time, stakeholders, and type of decision. How we implement public involvement, however, greatly affects outcomes and relationships. Our approach can either support or undermine our [Core Employee Values](#) of Integrity, Innovation, Collaboration, Respect, Excellence, and Celebration.

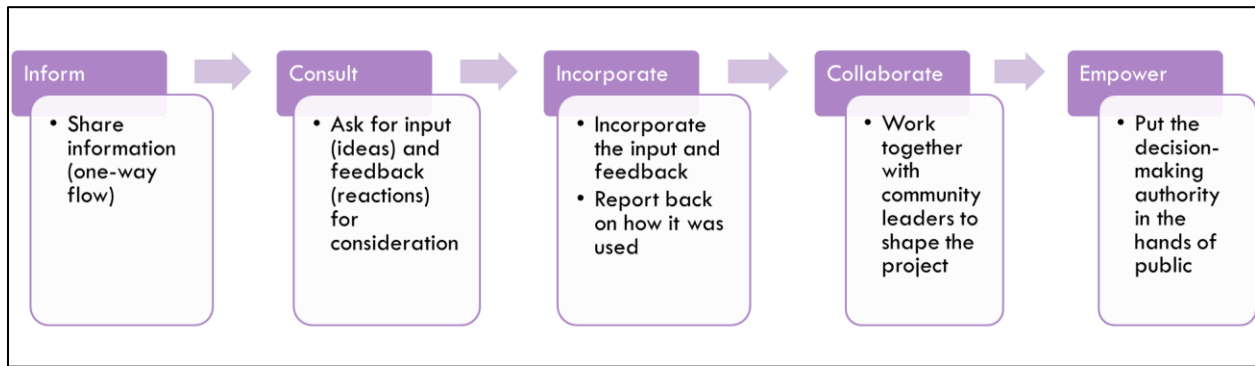


Figure 1: Spectrum of public involvement in decision-making processes, based on the IAP2 Spectrum

Why is community engagement important?

There are many reasons for us to engage the community as we envision, design, and build projects and programs. Many people want to be involved in the City’s decision-making and want to help find solutions to issues they observe, and there are many local, state, and federal laws that require public participation. An unintentional side effect of these well-intended requirements is that they can lead to one-size-fits-all, check-the-box, and do-the-bare-minimum approaches.

Often, an engagement process does not go well – community members feel left out, misinformation spreads, strong opposition develops, lawsuits are filed, project implementation slows or stalls out altogether. Bad experiences with a process can make staff dread going through it again and cause a retraction from engagement, perpetuating a cycle of bad experiences all around. Breaking the cycle requires approaching the process differently and trying new things. Recent experiences and lessons learned from other places have demonstrated that thoughtful, strategic engagement can and does lead to different results.

- a) Community engagement has the power to build **shared understanding** of problems, goals, and solutions. It can **build consensus** and lead to broad support for final decisions. When this happens, implementation of the decisions typically goes **smoother with fewer delays and lower costs**. Investing in processes upfront can lead to years of benefits.
- b) Inclusive engagement in decision-making has the power to **support more equitable outcomes**. For generations, governmental decision-making structures have intentionally excluded some voices and empowered others – and the effects of these structures are apparent in the distribution of benefits and burdens across our communities. Our decisions reflect the inputs into the process – such as data, values, and perspectives.
- c) Transparent, responsive, and consistent community engagement has the power to break the feedback loop in which distrust breeds more distrust. It can lead to **more trust, communication, and partnerships** between the City and its diverse communities. Conversely, when people distrust the City, our decisions are more likely to be misaligned with the community’s interests and implementation becomes more challenging.

What is the long-term vision for the City’s community engagement system?

This Framework envisions a City government embodying a culture of community engagement that **builds trust** with the community and uses transparent decision-making processes to produce the **best outcomes for all**.

What are the components of the City’s community engagement system?

The community engagement system has several components, and each of these components needs attention and support to be successful:

- **City staff:** including but not limited to project managers, community outreach specialists, directors, public information managers and other communications staff, and the Clerk’s Office
- **City Council:** including the Council members and their staff

- **Advisory bodies:** including appointed boards, commissions, and other advisory groups
- **Community leaders:** including community-based organizations, neighborhood leaders, and stakeholders such as property owners and businesses
- **Partner agencies:** other governmental agencies that engage the public and interact with the City on projects
- **Resources:** the funds, time, vendors, and supplemental staffing (e.g., consultants) needed to support the work
- **Tools:** the technology, materials, processes, and protocols that enable coordination, implementation, and communication

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to:

- a) Establish shared definitions and common understanding among City staff
- b) Clarify the relationships between racial equity, inclusion, and community engagement
- c) Serve as a philosophical guide to community engagement in San José
- d) Support coordination and consistency across departments
- e) Align outreach and engagement practices with the City's core values, including goals for equity, inclusion, and diversity
- f) Ultimately, support the vision for coordinated, responsive, and equitable community engagement

It is meant to be a living document, to be iterated on a regular basis. It serves as a companion to internal platforms (like the [Citywide Community Engagement SharePoint](#) spearheaded by the Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs) that will be continuously updated with best practices, tools, and resources.

This document was drafted by the City's Community Engagement Work Group (CEWG), as described in the Background section below. The CEWG is committed to helping maintain this Framework over time. The goal, however, is for all City staff to engage with it – to read it, put it into practice, provide feedback, and contribute to it as it evolves. We also encourage staff to engage with the associated platforms and share lessons learned so we can all benefit from each other's unique experiences.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Existing Policies related to community engagement

There are several local policies that inform public participation in decision-making processes. Many are in support of state and federal laws such as the Brown Act and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). A sample of these policies is listed below to provide a general sense of the regulatory context.

- General Plan and related policies: San Jose has been experiencing robust growth since the 1980s, and the City's General Plan is the blueprint for this growth. The current version, **Envision San Jose 2040**, was created in 2007 to assist staff by focusing our work around the 12 Major Strategies laid out in the Plan that provides environmental and economic guidance when making land use decisions. Because new developments are one area where it is common to let the community know about changes and ask for their feedback, the City's single engagement-related policy is [Council Policy 6-30, the Public Outreach Policy for Pending Land Use and Development Proposals](#). This policy only applies to development projects, though the City does go beyond the state mandated minimum notification period of 10 days (usually 14 days) and specifies the kinds of outreach required for projects of different sizes. However, as notification is based on a development project trigger and only those within a 500-1000 ft radius of the project would be notified, this policy should not be considered the bar for all engagement at the City.
- Municipal Code: The City's Municipal Code lays out all the local ordinances the City has made law, and it covers the whole gamut of topics from general information about how the government should run to the animal shelter to transportation to zoning. Despite its breadth, the CSJ Muni Code only touches on engagement to the public in one section, [Chapter 2.08: Boards and Commissions](#). Because Boards and Commissions are meant to provide independent recommendations to Council or to make independent decisions and take administrative actions, this section is the most related to public feedback. The Boards and Commissions play an important role by being visible in the community and bringing a broad representation of ideas into the process. However, the Muni Code only provides the broad constraints around how to set up a Board or Commission. The City provides further details in Council Policy 0-4.
- [Council Policy 0-4](#): This Policy was created to fully define the policies and customs as related to the Boards and Commissions that were established by the Municipal Code. Because of the intended outreach and engagement Board members and Commissioners do in their role, Section IV of the Policy, the Code of Conduct, focuses heavily on how and when a Commissioner can name themselves as a representative of the City when seeking perspectives from the public related to the current work of the Commission or Board.
- Open Government: The City takes being transparent with the public about how decisions are made very seriously, and there are 2 laws in place that touch on that. Transparency and the rules surrounding it is an important component when you are going to the public for their feedback on something. The state of California created [the Brown Act](#), a law that guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies, in 1953. This law lays out what government is supposed to do to ensure that the public understands when decisions are being made and given proper notice so they can provide feedback before the decision is made. It requires agendas for meetings where a decision is being taken are posted no later than 72 hours prior to the meeting and provides rules for when notes and supplemental documents must be posted, among others. The City decided to pass its own ordinance to take the Brown Act a bit further. The [San Jose Open Government Resolution \(Sunshine Resolution 77135\)](#), adopted in August of 2014, lays out some minimum requirements for when and how engagement should happen and sets a 10 day agenda noticing requirement instead of the State 72 hours, among several other requirements.

- [Language Equity Policy](#): The City created a Language Access Policy (revised and renamed the Language Equity Policy in October 2022) in November 2016 to ensure that staff are providing services in the languages spoken by our residents since almost 40% of San Joseans speak a language other than English at home. Given the diversity of languages, it is critical that engagement and outreach plans consider *from the beginning* what potential document translation and speaker-to-speaker interpretation needs are in order to ensure you have sufficient funding set aside to pay for those services. For additional information on how staff can access the pool of interpretation/translation vendors they City has, you can log into VPN and check out the [Language Access Services page](#) on the intranet. (Please note that only City staff can access this link, and only when connected to VPN or hardlined into the City network at a City facility.)

Relationship to racial equity

Talking to the people, especially those most affected by decisions the City makes, is a foundational part of doing equity work in any community. The premise of equity is that we should give to everyone what they need to succeed in the moment, taking into consideration their starting place in comparison to others in the community. In this way, everyone has an equal chance to succeed. In order for government policy, programs, and projects to be designed in such a way, staff need to ensure that they have a full grasp on what the conditions are for the communities they are working with, and rather than make assumptions, the best way to vet and understand those conditions is to talk to people.

Engagement is powerful, and make or break a project, program, or policy. Without engagement, residents lose the ability to shape their own neighborhoods and lose faith in civic processes. City staff will most likely face community opposition as a result. On the flip side, engagement that takes into consideration all the lived experiences of the target population and makes efforts to provide information and feedback opportunities in as many forms, venues, languages, and using different kinds of technology will improve the final outcome and can begin to heal the distrust residents have of government.

The City is increasingly prioritizing racial equity as a guiding principle in our decision-making. The City has offered a variety of different data trainings, tools, and worksheets to help staff as they begin to develop their equity “muscles.” As those who help shape the decisions that impact the lives of all of San José’s residents, staff have an enormous responsibility to make the most effective, efficient, and equitable recommendations they can. Incorporating equity into decision-making is not just about data collection and impact analysis; inclusive, meaningful engagement of impacted populations is critical.

Moreover, with the local and national focus on equity, some of the local community are increasingly expecting to both hear more about and have more of a role to play in decision-making. This requires early consideration of how community engagement will fit into the decision-making processes. Staff must clarify the level of involvement and co-creation desired and determine when and how to seek community feedback.

Community Engagement Work Group

This document was drafted by the City’s Community Engagement Work Group (CEWG). The CEWG is a volunteer group of staff who care about and do community engagement as part of their jobs. They came together in summer of 2020 as a working group under the citywide team trained through the Government Alliance for Race and Equity (GARE) program. As described further below, the CEWG was interested in the role of community engagement in advancing racial equity. The CEWG members also wanted to learn from each other and begin standardizing the approach the City takes to engagement. The CEWG has since grown in membership and is open to any interested staff member, beyond the GARE-trained group.

The CEWG’s mission is to research, develop, and integrate best practices for coordinated, responsive, and equitable community engagement throughout the City government. The following are the shared values of the CEWG:

- We apply an equity lens to our work, prioritizing racial equity.
- We are solution- and action-oriented.
- We break down silos to coordinate and share resources interdepartmentally.
- We see community trust as foundational to all our work in city government.

The CEWG has identified existing barriers to this vision for community engagement. The CEWG's work to date forms the foundation for this Framework. The CEWG researched the work of other municipalities throughout California and has integrated that research into this framework.

SECTION 3: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Many of our Core Employee Values also serve as ideals for thoughtful community engagement:

- a. Listen
- b. Honor diverse views and backgrounds
- c. Communicate openly and positively
- d. Be open, honest, and accountable
- e. Foster teamwork and support partnerships
- f. Promote cooperation and win-win solutions
- g. Make tough decisions
- h. Demonstrate fiscal responsibility
- i. Provide outstanding service
- j. Build on successes and failures
- k. Promote continuous improvement
- l. Encourage creativity

Guiding Principles

Building upon these values are the following guiding principles for community engagement practice in San José.

Develop and implement **people-centered** engagement processes:

1. Treat community members with respect and empathy.
2. Frame issues in ways that are relevant to community members. Make it interesting and worthwhile for them to participate in the process.
3. Ask for input that matters to the decision-making process. Avoid asking for feedback that is not actionable to you and the project.
4. Seek out and acknowledge input received through other processes, which demonstrates appreciation for the time and effort of community members.
5. Coordinate with other processes to minimize redundancy in engagement events and consolidate our “asks” of over-stretched community leaders.

Develop and implement **equitable** engagement processes:

1. Acknowledge past harms to communities of color, the structural disadvantages persistent in our society, and the role of government in contributing to structural racism.
2. Intentionally involve and actively seek input from under-represented populations through inclusive practices. Consider multiple forms of diversity and equity (income, gender, ability, language, etc.).
3. Seek to reduce disparities while improving outcomes for all – in the decision-making process and in the decisions themselves.
4. See every engagement process as an opportunity to improve trust, build relationships, and increase community capacity to participate in decision-making processes.
5. Get involved in the community outside of your official engagement process. Seek to better understand issues and perspectives. Work to build relationships and trust.

Develop and implement **accessible** engagement processes:

1. Design your process and specific engagement methods such that everybody can participate meaningfully.
2. Anticipate and remove logistical and structural barriers to participation.
3. Strive to make engagement fun and interesting to community members.
4. Communicate information clearly. Use clear, simple language. Minimize the use of technical jargon. Incorporate definitions and education. Adjust your communications to reflect the audience.
5. Recognize that everyone learns differently. Use a variety of ways to share information, including visuals.
6. Give people multiple opportunities to engage with a project for a given round of outreach. Offer a mix of methods during each phase of the process, including in-person and online, formal and less formal, open to the public and targeted.
7. Recognize that everyone has a different comfort level with civic engagement. Use engagement methods that provide opportunities for all participants to give their opinions and welcome people

into the dialogue, such as through structured discussion techniques. Support dialogue with the City and with other community members.

8. Make information available online in multiple languages and in easy-to-find places.

Develop and implement **transparent and accountable** engagement processes:

1. Share information with the public in a clear and timely manner.
2. Be consistent. Engage the community early on and throughout the process.
3. Recognize and value the insights and expertise of community members.
4. Demonstrate the effect of the engagement. Track what changes were made due to the feedback received from community. Report back to participants.
5. Be open about the decision-making process and clear about the role of the public/stakeholders in the process.
6. Follow through with expectations and action items.
7. Be available for follow-up questions and conversations.
8. Ask for feedback on the process and consistently try to improve.

Develop and implement **collaborative** engagement processes:

1. Pursue ways to empower the community to identify problems and co-create solutions – working with the City and other partners.
2. Partner with community-based organizations, business associations, local agencies, and other leaders to reach out and involve target populations.
3. Incorporate “mutual learning” methods to develop shared understanding of issues, goals, and solutions.

Going from Principles to Process

Together, these principles help build trust and strengthen relationships. Here are recommended steps for applying these principles to a given process:

- a. **Develop a community engagement strategy at the beginning of a project.** The first step involves getting clear with the team about the scope of the project and the details of the decision-making process. Ask questions such as: Who is making the decisions? What are the deliverables? What are the key milestones? Who are the stakeholders? Should we take a phased approach to the public involvement?
- b. **Identify metrics of success.** Ask questions like: How will we know the process was successful? What are our process objectives? What can and should we measure to evaluate our progress? Examples include level of support expressed at the final hearing of the project, number of people in attendance at engagement events, demographic representation of participants, percentage of participants that respond favorably to event evaluations, etc.
- c. **Use the IAP2 spectrum or similar tool to identify the public involvement approach for the process and key decision points along the way.** Ask the team questions like: How will the public be involved? What influence will various stakeholders have over key decisions? How important is it to build consensus across stakeholders? Explore opportunities for collaboration and empowerment as ways to build consensus, increase trust, and result in community-driven outcomes.
- d. **Establish a list of outreach and engagement methods you intend to use based on the selected approach(es).** There is no one-size-fits-all approach to community engagement, and the specific methods will vary depending on the project scope, stakeholders, resources, timing, and other factors.
- e. **Consider the relationship with City Council offices, especially if City Council will have the final decision.** Understand their goals for the engagement process and how they want to be involved. Plan time for check-ins so the project team can anticipate concerns and address them as they would with any other key stakeholder.

- f. **Allocate sufficient resources to support the objectives and metrics of success.** This includes staffing (e.g., engagement specialists, consultants), funding for language access and other direct costs, and time. Adjust the scope to align with available resources and vice versa. This may be an iterative process.
- g. **Get input from stakeholders on the draft engagement strategy before beginning to implement it.** They will be more likely to get involved and buy into the outcomes if they helped shaped the process.
- h. **Treat the strategy as a living document.** Iterate as you get feedback from stakeholders. Reflect, adapt, and innovate as you implement it. Making time for reflection during and after the process will not only improve outcomes, but it will also help build institutional capacity for the next process.
- i. **Set clear expectations with the public at the beginning and as the process evolves.** Be honest about the level of involvement the public will have and follow through with it. Avoid making promises that you can't keep.

SECTION 4: COMPONENTS OF THE CITY'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM

The City already conducts community engagement as part of its decision-making processes. Who is involved, and how does it work today? This section explains:

1. The key components of the community engagement system,
2. Current challenges for each component, and
3. Proposed solutions to increase the effectiveness of each component.

City staff

At any point in time, the City is undertaking dozens of projects/programs (hereafter referred to as “projects”) that involve the public. Each project typically has a project manager and team of technical experts, directors, and mid-managers. The **project management team** is responsible for managing the community engagement process for the project, including strategy development, consultant and resource procurement, and event planning. However, the staff members that engage the community as part of their work often do not have engagement explicitly mentioned in their job descriptions. There is a wide range of background experience, knowledge, and skills among staff that are involved with engagement processes. A small number of projects have a **dedicated staff** person for community engagement. These people wear many hats and can coordinate most aspects of the engagement process. However, they do not replace the need for technical staff to be involved in the process.

Need: additional, structured trainings for all staff involved in engagement processes – recognizing the unique roles that each level plays. Project/program managers and others who play a lead role within implementing community engagement should be required to attend these trainings.

Public information managers and other communication staff are responsible for communicating with the public, media, and other agencies, in a clear and consistent manner ranging from press conferences about crisis information to City project promotion. Communications staff often support engagement processes by creating and updating websites, posting announcements to social media, reviewing public-facing materials, and advising on ways to inform and engage the public as part of the process. Recently, the City has invested more in language access, like translations and interpretation services. For example, the CMO Communication division recently added a language access manager position that can assist with [the process of providing translation and interpretation services](#) (please note this is an intranet link).

Need: additional clarity about when and how communications staff should be involved in engagement processes – as well as more consistency across departments with respect to access to the expertise and resources that communication staff can offer.

There is a list of **bilingual staff** that have been certified as speaking and/or writing in another language. They get paid a monthly stipend to provide bilingual services as part of their regular job. In practice, bilingual staff (including those that are not on the certified list) get asked to support the projects of other staff, doing tasks like translating documents, assisting with outreach, or attending engagement events.

Need: additional bilingual staff to support departments with their outreach and engagement work.

This staff should be able to present and facilitate in-language. This would reduce the strain on bilingual staff who volunteer or who are “voluntold” to do this extra work.

As described above, the purpose of the **CEWG** is to develop best practices for equitable community engagement throughout our organization. The CEWG has served other functions, but the focus is on improving citywide systems to support staff as engagement practitioners.

Need: keep the CEWG group resourced and recognized – The CEWG supports the systemic evolution of community engagement. A broader “community of practice” should be maintained as a network of all staff regularly engaging the community to share ideas and resources for specific efforts. serves as a

small initial community of practice, it would offer space to share best practices and lessons learned and to work through issues together.

The **Clerk's Office** plays an important role in public involvement:

1. Managing official boards and commissions, which often include members of the community
2. Supporting some of the ongoing engagement opportunities residents have by providing training, quarterly updates on policy and best practices, and answering ongoing questions of Boards and Commission secretaries.
3. Posting Board and Commission meeting agendas and provide guidelines for when and how to post minutes for public notice.

Important Next steps: Work with Clerk's Office to align practices and processes of community engagement best practices – The CEWG and Clerk's Office can align on key practices including language access, common terminology and proactive outreach strategies.

Consultants

Staff hires consultants to augment staff's capacity in developing and implementing the community engagement strategy for their project. Staff should carefully vet potential consultants and build into their RFPs questions or requirements that ask the consultant to demonstrate their engagement experience. Because local context is supremely important to a successful engagement campaign, staff should carefully consider whether to hire a consultant who is not from San Jose or does not have extensive, demonstrated experience working with the local residents. Additionally, staff should provide all consultants with a history of the community or neighborhood the work will be focused on to set up the consultant for success by understanding the history that has come to shape the current community perspectives.

It is hard to know what to strive for when looking for a consultant without examples. An evolving list of good engagement or outreach City staff have done with consultants is below:

- The City's COVID Recovery Taskforce partnered with two consultants, Reimi and Winter, to engage residents through several avenues. A [full report of this engagement effort can be found here](https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/community-and-economic-recovery-task-force) (https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/community-and-economic-recovery-task-force)

City Council

The City Council members and their staff play an important role in community engagement processes, particularly on projects where they will be the final decision-maker. Council offices help distribute information and spread the word about opportunities to get involved. They sometimes host meetings with their constituents to augment staff-led events.

Need: More clarity about when and how to involve Council offices in engagement processes-- Staff are often advised to not interact with City Council members because staff do not take orders from Council. However, City Council members have a vested interest in developing strong, deep relationships with their own constituents and therefore can be a powerful ally in engagement. Determining how a staff member should work with a Council office should be determined with that staff member's supervisor and within their departmental hierarchy to ensure that staff remain focused on the Administration's plan and priorities.

Advisory bodies

The City has many boards, commissions, and other advisory groups consisting of members that are external to the City. The general role of the advisory bodies is to provide feedback and guidance on City policy, making them

a commonly used method for community engagement. Most of the advisory bodies are appointed by the City Council and are subject to the Brown Act and other formal rules and processes. This level of formality comes with pros and cons. Advisory bodies should be treated as one means to an end (not an end in itself) and should not be the only method of engagement for any given process.

Need: More clarity about when and how staff can engage with established advisory bodies as part of their engagement processes, and guidance for when and how the City should establish a new advisory group.

Community leaders

Community leaders are critical to any engagement process. This group includes people representing community-based organizations (CBOs), homeowner and tenant associations, neighborhood associations, business associations and other advocacy and special interests. Community leaders often serve as liaisons between the City and community: sharing information, educating their communities about issues, gathering feedback, and helping to represent their communities' interest in the process. They help get the word out about opportunities to engage and encourage participation, and they may even host their own events and activities. The City has an increasing number of examples of partnerships with community groups, ranging from informal to structured agreements involving compensation.

One example of a such a successful partnership is Project Hope. The Project Hope team is a partnership between City departments and San José residents that promotes change in San José communities that historically have not been consulted when the City makes changes. The team collaborates with marginalized communities to empower residents and encourage leadership in and advocacy for their communities. This type of community engagement involves residents in the decision-making process by allowing community members to voice their priorities and work with the City to identify resources, expand facilities, and develop programs to address their needs and improve quality of life for all residents. Because of their unique model, they are a good team to consider reaching out to when you have any kind of information to share or want to talk to a neighborhood that has historically not approached the City with concerns or requests. (See Examples below for some ways other departments have worked with Project Hope to further their own engagement and outreach goals.)

Need: Based on lessons learned from these experiences and research on other municipalities, we need a **stable source of funding and clear mechanisms for partnering with CBOs on engagement processes**, including keeping a slate of qualified CBOs with Master Consultant Agreements and providing grants that allow for flexible timelines and capacity-building. This structure would address many challenges with the City's procurement process from CBO perspectives, build capacity among CBOs and staff working with CBOs, and consider and navigate the advocacy roles that some CBOs play in addition to service provision and outreach/engagement support.

Potential solutions

- Clear guidance on when to pursue partnerships with community groups and how to do this.
- A stable source of funding for supporting CBO partnerships, such as grants, and that can help CBOs leverage other funding sources to grow capacity
- A mechanism for having CBOs on retainer, such as on-call Master Agreements or Preferred Vendor lists, particularly CBOs that can help advance racial equity goals

Partner Agencies

Other governmental agencies that engage the public and interact with the City on projects are another source of partnership with the City. Other public agencies have their own networks, communication channels, and projects upon which the City can piggyback (and vice versa) to optimize time and resources. Coordination across agencies can also offer more user-friendly experiences for the public.

Need: Improved communication and coordination channels with other public agencies for better community engagement outcomes across all government agencies.

SUPPLEMENTAL: SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

The CEWG has identified several citywide challenges as practitioners of community engagement. Achieving the vision will require addressing these challenges.

Interdepartmental coordination and the challenge of silos

The City has 22 departments and offices and many subdepartments and initiatives operating under the umbrella of the City administration. Each group has its own internal organization, structures, processes, and procedures. This structure makes it hard to share information and coordinate across departments. When you layer in hierarchy within any given department, communication can break down even further.

There is a lack of coordination across Department engagement plans, which causes inefficiencies, redundancies, and missed opportunities for collaboration. An example is when staff from different departments schedule events aimed at the same or similar audiences at the same time, because there is no easy way to identify scheduling conflicts. Another example is when staff seeks to involve the same community groups on different projects during the same period, putting extra strain on the community groups.

It is also challenging to share the wealth of information that comes from an engagement process, including data (e.g., community input), findings, and process learnings (i.e., what worked well and what did not). It is especially difficult to share across departments in an efficient and meaningful way. Staff assigned to lead engagement efforts typically do not have the time or tools to do the level of coordination that would be most helpful. As a result, there is often limited sharing about what staff is hearing from the community even if that information is relevant for a different department. For example, a SJPD-sponsored meeting on public safety may also lead to community feedback on traffic conditions relevant to DOT. Without the proper information-sharing, DOT may not receive the relevant community feedback.

When sharing and coordination does not occur, staff ends up repeating similar work and asking the same community members similar questions over time. This leads to community burnout and frustration with the City, which undermines all our processes. A better approach would include mechanisms to share information and coordinate across departments, so that the City can be more responsive to community concerns and implement engagement processes more efficiently and effectively. For example, being able to quickly and easily understand which staff is working with which communities will help reduce conflicts and increase opportunities for collaboration.

This section shares some proposed solutions to these larger systemic challenges in the following areas:

- Breaking down silos among staff, including:
 - creating a list or organizational chart of all staff working on community engagement;
 - establishing an internal calendar that all staff can easily access and conveniently add to when planning engagement events; and
 - developing a central repository, such as a Client Relations Management (CRM) system to track the community engagement that is happening or has happened.
- Increase in dedicated staffing for engagement and/or outreach work that can focus on interdepartmental coordination;
- Solidified cultural value around engagement and outreach including demonstrating ongoing interest in resident feedback by developing mechanisms to capture and share public feedback across the institution; and
- Broader resource limitations.

Breaking Down Silos

CEWG staff have identified several organizational processes and/or system limitations that are creating barriers between staff members who do outreach or engagement work as part of their jobs. Addressing these barriers would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of engagement work by all staff by allowing for more coordination and organization of City staff.

Updated Engagement Staff List

So staff can more efficiently coordinate across processes, share findings, and help each other, the organization should develop a list of all City staff who do outreach/engagement work that includes relevant information to determine who to contact in other departments about current and past engagement processes and to request assistance. This list should be updated every six months as staff turns over. At minimum, this list will include the following information about each staff member:

- Name
- Contact
- Position title
- Department & division
- Role description related to community engagement
- Active projects that involve community engagement & the organization(s) that are involved in the project

Additional information that would be useful to add to the list, but is not required, includes:

- Skills related to community engagement like fluency in languages, experience in organizing/outreach, and experience with meeting facilitation
- Demographics (e.g., gender, age, race)

Citywide Engagement Calendar

When the CEWG began, we heard from many staff who are doing engagement that they were lacking a calendar that captured when other outreach and engagement opportunities are happening, what neighborhoods those outreach and engagement efforts are centered around, and what topics or concerns those efforts are seeking resident feedback about. Such a calendar would allow different staff in different departments to share information they're hearing with others who are working in the same neighborhood, coordinate and intentionally distinguish messaging, surveys, and other engagement opportunities from others happening at the same time, and even consolidate meetings down so two or more topics could be presented for feedback to the same community at the same time.

Residents have long complained about the lack of awareness and coordination different departments have with regards to other departments and agencies seeking that same neighborhood's feedback about different issues. From a practical perspective, a resident only cares that they have 3 different community meetings scheduled for the same week with the City of San Jose, and they express understandable frustration that so much of their time is being asked for when a single meeting could have touched on all 3 topics. From the staff perspective, we have always known that engagement is hard because it requires people's time, and those who have been systemically disadvantaged have the least amount of free time to give to such activities.

The CEWG attempted an internal Outlook based calendar, and it still active. However, this kind of calendar is only useful if *every engagement and outreach opportunity is captured*, not just some of them. New tools and processes are difficult to instill in an organization as large as City of San Jose without Citywide coordination and building use of the calendar into everyday engagement staff expectations at all levels. The CEWG is happy to share our calendar and experience with it with anyone who is interested in setting up a Citywide calendar.

Customer Relations Management (CRM) Database

Because everyone finds repeating themselves upsetting, residents express frustration that they have made the same complaints over and over again with different City staff, and no staff member is able to know and respond

to those concerns. Certainly, with so many departments and offices, it is unreasonable to expect any individual engagement staff person to know all the issues for the neighborhood they are working in without a formalized information intake, management, and access system in place. That is why the CEWG has been pursuing the idea of a Citywide CRM that keeps track of individual concerns and complaints as well as information on feedback heard from neighborhood, homeowner, and business associations, community-based organizations and their advocacy groups, and any other organized group who has provided a concern or feedback. Such a CRM would allow engagement staff to see the details of previous work happening in the neighborhood or population, previous priorities for those communities, and some context for what kinds of issues those groups or individuals have. It would allow sharing of information as well as details on institutional relationships with specific people.

Dedicated Staffing

Ideally, dedicated staffing would include three layers:

- dedicated staff positions that specialize in community engagement, who would lead specific efforts and serve as resource for project teams
- department-wide community engagement coordinator, who would ensure collaboration and consistency across all department engagement efforts and ensure communication with other department-wide coordinators
- dedicated community engagement staff within the City Manager's Office that can support all departments and lead citywide initiatives

By having community engagement as core to their job descriptions, these dedicated staff would also be instrumental in advancing the CEWG roadmap, which is currently driven by staff who often have to squeeze in this work.

Inconsistent culture and guidance around community engagement

The culture around community engagement varies widely across the City. We all face competing pressures on time and resources, which often leads to cutting back on the engagement process. Shifting priorities as leadership turns over and the lack of clear, overarching strategy or guidance contribute to the inconsistency. The default is to do the bare minimum as required by law or policy.

While some factors are out of staff's control, CEWG staff observe that some do not recognize the value of quality community engagement. When this happens, the message is that doing outreach and engagement is too much work relative to other project management responsibilities, or that the project budget should be spent on other things. With contentious projects, there can be a tendency to pull away even further from public outreach and dialogue. This is often a reflection of previous bad experiences with community engagement that have shaped staff's approach to current processes. Understandably, bad experiences can cause dread and resistance with future projects.

In addition, it is often the case that staff is undertaking an engagement process to inform a project that is based on the City's needs, such as implementing a regulation. When this happens, the issues at hand can be misaligned with the issues that the community wants to address, and the outcomes are not fully responsive to the most urgent community needs. We see this when community members bring up "out of scope" concerns at a public meeting. While regulations often constrain what decisions can be influenced by the public and how an engagement process must go, there are also many ways in which the City could engage with the community in more meaningful ways to them. This means not only engaging the community when we need them, but when they need something and want to be involved in problem-solving. It means sharing the decision-making power in strategic ways. When done effectively, this would build more community ownership in the solutions and more trust in each other.

A culture shift is needed throughout the City – away from seeing community engagement as a burden or obligation and toward seeing it as an investment in better outcomes and relationships. We should look for ways

to make the process more enjoyable for all involved and build the habits associated with effective, equitable engagement.

Proposed solutions:

- Adopt clear citywide expectations for what it means to do quality engagement work (using this framework as a starting point).
- Ensure that each department/division has the appropriate resources to meet those expectations.
- Develop quantitative and qualitative metrics, co-created with community members, to track the City's performance on community engagement objectives and the public's satisfaction – use this data to motivate and drive internal change.
- Implement staff surveys to understand attitudes, challenges, and ideas related to community engagement – use the feedback to address barriers.
- Invest in staff training and leadership development to build a shared sense of importance in quality engagement.
- Encourage collective learning from each process through systematic reflection, sharing, and constructive feedback.
- Hold managers accountable to expectations and results, recognizing the constraints.
- Celebrate successes and recognize staff's accomplishments.

Resource limitations

CEWG staff also observes insufficiencies in funding for community engagement, which often has secondary impact on timelines. This includes things like providing food and childcare at events, offering stipends and incentives to participants, investing in staff trainings, etc. Funding for engagement is typically project-based, leading to disparities in the quality of the process across projects and departments. Often staff will seek grant funding to help fill in those resources needs, but heavy reliance on grant funding also means timelines are short, and long-term, consistent community engagement is not supported by project budgets.

While grant funding has its limitations, it is sometimes the only way to fund outreach and engagement efforts. To help staff find solutions to this challenge, the organization should develop a regularly maintained and updated list of potential grant opportunities for engagement and/or outreach divided by project type that includes any requirements.

When talking to long-time staff and community leaders, many people reflect back on the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative as a positive example of community engagement and wish to see a similar program today. With the loss of the Redevelopment Agency and economic downturns, the City has had to cut back on staff trainings and community building programs such as SNI. Over the past couple of years, however, the Human Resources Department and others have begun to invest in training programs. Staff encourages those efforts and expanding those programs to additional staff and for trainings that provide more depth for those who have been doing the work longer.

To allow staff to more easily use funding to pay for smaller costs that increase the likelihood of good turnout at City events, CEWG members have identified a handful of internal policies that should be revisited to streamline efforts and bring in previous disallowed expenses. Things like food for a community meeting, childcare, and small incentives or compensation for time and expertise provided should be reviewed with consideration of both transparency and importance of those services to a successful engagement. Additionally, because engagement funding generally is project-specific, there is not a lot of funding available or even accounted for in the original funding source. Staff recommends either creating a central fund for language access services and having that be a standing part of the organizational budget moving forward or investing in a state and Federal campaign advocacy campaign so new grant and project funding includes a carve out for language access services.

Glossary of Terms

A shared vocabulary helps foster a shared understanding. The following are terms City staff has come across while doing engagement work, and the working definitions we have for those terms. This glossary is based on those found at [Generocity](#), [the Racial Equity Tools Glossary](#), [the City of San José's Office of Racial Equity](#), and other sources.

Engagement vs. Outreach: Although there is no commonly agreed to definition of community engagement, and use of the term varies widely, here is how Granicus, the City's Brown Act compliance provider, defines it - Community engagement is based on the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision making around it. It, moreover, holds the promise that public participation can influence decisions that affect the provision of services, future visions and sustainability of our communities.¹

By contrast, some City staff talk about outreach instead. Community outreach in this context is thought to be more about *informing* the community of upcoming decisions, changes, or projects. This means sharing information in a one-way fashion, not intending to make any changes based on community feedback.

Diversity: A multiplicity of races, genders, sexual orientations, classes, ages, countries of origin, educational status, religions, physical, or cognitive abilities, documentation status, etc. within a community, organization or grouping of some kind. Pop wisdom: Achieving diversity is not the same thing as achieving inclusion or equity.

Equity: Fairness and justice in policy, practice, and opportunity consciously designed to address the distinct challenges of non-dominant social groups, with an eye to equitable outcomes. See also: Racial equity.

Inclusion: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Racial equity (City of San José definition approved by City Council on February 1, 2022): Both a process and an outcome, racial equity is designed to center anti-racism, eliminate systemic racial inequities, and acknowledge the historical and existing practices that have led to discrimination and injustices to Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x/e, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities. The racial equity process explicitly prioritizes communities that have been economically deprived and underserved, and establishes a practice for creating psychologically safe spaces for racial groups that have been most negatively impacted by policies and practices. It is action that prioritizes liberation and measurable change, and focuses on lived experiences of all impacted racial groups. It requires the setting of goals and measures to track progress, with the recognition that strategies must be targeted to close the gaps. As an outcome, racial equity is achieved when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes, and everyone can prosper and thrive.

Ethnicity vs. race

Racism

- Institutional racism: "Insti-tu-tion-al racism is racial inequity with-in insti-tu-tions and sys-tems of pow-er, such as places of employ-ment, gov-ern-ment agen-cies and social ser-vices. It can take the form of unfair poli-cies and prac-tices, dis-crim-i-na-to-ry treat-ment and inequitable oppor-tu-ni-ties and outcomes. A school sys-tem that con-cen-trates peo-ple of col-or in the most over-crowd-ed and under-resourced schools with the least qual-i-fied teach-ers com-pared to the edu-ca-tion-al oppor-tu-ni-ties of white stu-dents is an exam-ple of insti-tu-tion-al racism."²

¹ <https://granicus.com/blog/what-is-community-engagement/>

² Annie E. Casey Foundation, <https://www.aecf.org/blog/racial-justice-definitions>

- Structural racism: “is racial bias among institutions and across society. This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color.”³

Equity vs. equality

Ableism: “is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. At its heart, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require ‘fixing’ and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, [ableism classifies entire groups of people as ‘less than,’](#) and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of people with disabilities.”⁴

Intersectionality: A term coined by Black lawyer and scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to describe how race, class, gender, age and other aspects of identity intersect and inform the experience of individuals or groups of people. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression in the same way as does a Black man. Each intersection produces a distinct life experience.

Representation: “Ensuring that population demographics are appropriately reflected in participation, leadership, decision making, etc.”⁵

Community: “a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.”⁶

Stakeholder: “A stakeholder can be any person, community, company, or group who is impacted (both negatively or positively) by an issue and how it is handled.”⁷

Resident vs. Citizen:

- “[Citizenship](#) refers to a person's allegiance to a government in exchange for its protection at home and abroad. Full political rights, including the right to vote and to hold public office, and civil liberties are typically granted to a native-born [citizen](#) (under *jus soli*, a Latin legal term meaning, literally, “right of the soil”) or to a [naturalized](#) citizen—i.e., a person who has successfully met official requirements that make him or her a citizen of a country other than their country of birth.”
- “**Resident:** In the court of law, the term *resident* is often contrasted with *citizen*: it names a person who has a residence in a particular place but does not necessarily have the status of a citizen.”⁸ CEWG prefers “resident” because it encompasses citizens and non-citizens alike, covering the whole of the people who live in San Jose and whom we serve.

³ *Four Levels of Racism*, Race Forward Model. <https://www.cacgrants.org/assets/ce/Documents/2019/FourLevelsOfRacism.pdf>

⁴ Access Living. <https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/>

⁵ North Carolina Center for Nonprofits.

https://www.nnonprofits.org/sites/default/files/resource_attachments/OSLS%20Diversity%20Inclusion%20Equity%20Table.pdf

⁶ “What Is Community? An Evidence-Based Definition for Participatory Public Health,” *Am J Public Health*. 2001 December; 91(12): 1929–1938. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1446907/>

⁷ Southern Connecticut State University, Buley Library, Public Policy in Public Health and Social Work: Stakeholders.

<https://libguides.southernct.edu/c.php?g=7103&p=3139143>

⁸ Merriam-Webster, Using ‘Citizen’ and ‘Resident’ Legally. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/grammar/what-is-the-difference-between-a-citizen-and-a-resident>

Historically underrepresented: "groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States and, according to the Census and other federal measuring tools, includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans. This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs, and housing, resulting in marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved. Other groups in the United States have been marginalized and are currently underrepresented. These groups may include but are not limited to: other ethnicities, adult learners, veterans, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, different religious groups, and different economic backgrounds."⁹

Historically underserved: This term refers to groups who have been denied access and/or suffered past institutional discrimination in the United States and, according to the Census and other federal measuring tools, includes African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics or Chicanos/Latinos, and Native Americans. This is revealed by an imbalance in the representation of different groups in common pursuits such as education, jobs, and housing, resulting in marginalization for some groups and individuals and not for others, relative to the number of individuals who are members of the population involved. Other groups in the United States have been marginalized and are currently underrepresented. These groups may include but are not limited to: Other ethnicities; Adult learners; Veterans; People with disabilities; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals; Different religious groups, and Different economic backgrounds."¹⁰

Equity Priority Communities: are census tracts in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that have a significant concentration of underserved populations, such as households with low incomes and people of color. A combination of additional factors helps define these areas. The designation was created by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to enable the regional planning agency to direct funding to projects that "enable more equitable access to transportation, housing and services."¹¹

Words to Avoid: In order to avoid insulting people while trying to identify and talk about a population that has historically been underserved, make sure to use **people first language** where you're describing the humanity of the people first and their life circumstances second. For example, it is usually better to say "people who are unhoused" instead of "homeless people"

Some words we suggest avoiding:

- Marginalized
- Disadvantaged
- High needs
- Disenfranchised
- Oppressed

No matter which ones you pick, make sure you understand the terms you decide to use. The public or community partners have their own ideas about what the right terms are, so be prepared to define your terms and explain your choice.

⁹ Georgia Southern University, Office of Inclusive Excellence. <https://president.georgiasouthern.edu/inclusive-excellence/terminology/>

¹⁰ Emory University, Institutional Equity and Compliance. <https://equityandcompliance.emory.edu/resources/self-guided-learning/common-terms.html#:~:text=Historically%20Underrepresented,%2FLatinos%2C%20and%20Native%20Americans.>

¹¹ Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Equity Priority Communities. <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>

Consider ways to talk about the work and the groups you're working with in ways that are positive and that center the strengths that community has to offer *while always being truthful*. This is not the place to sugar coat things, but all communities and groups have strengths, so think carefully about how you can bring that in.