Community Engagement Toolkit

Guidance and Resources for Engaging Community in Planning and Policy Development

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

In partnership with Public Health-Seattle & King County, Futurewise, Interim CDA, OneAmerica and El Centro de la Raza worked together in 2014 to develop and pilot new approaches to engaging community in local government planning.

The purpose of the project was to:

- Develop and identify promising practices for successfully engaging residents that traditionally have limited participation in planning processes, and
- Develop specific tools that communities can tailor and use to successfully engage residents in local planning and problem-solving efforts.

We designed this toolkit for community leaders, local government agencies, non-profit organizations, and motivated community leaders who are interested in engaging community on planning and community development issues.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

A healthy, thriving equitable community is one in which people have easy access to work, home and places in between, affordable housing, quality education, economic opportunity, healthy environments, parks and open space, and the ability to participate in democratic processes (and actually do so).

All of these elements of a healthy thriving community start with local government planning. Planning influences environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions of community livability and vibrancy. It has the ability to promote access to knowledge, health and well-being and foster social cohesion and civic engagement.

Creating healthy, thriving, equitable communities requires engaged community members, organizations, and institutions. Engagement enables people to have a greater say in the planning, design and implementation of their community. It helps local government provide services and solutions that are better suited to people's needs. When people are allowed to have input into decisions that affect their lives, they are more committed and empowered to get involved in the hard work of making their community better after the planning process ends. Public engagement also helps build community connections, increases an individual's or organization's skills to influence change, and helps individuals and organizations see their role in something larger than themselves.

Given the importance of planning and the value of robust community engagement, Futurewise and its partner organizations have produced this *Community Engagement Toolkit*. We believe community engagement in the planning process is absolutely critical to ensuring the community's needs are represented in the policies and investments that are made. These investments shape the health and future of each person who lives or works there.

Recognizing there is no one-size-fits-all approach, the toolkit promotes creative, collaborative and integrated approaches to engagement that will spark new approaches, ideas and partnerships. The toolkit was developed to specifically support local governments but has application across public and non-profit organizations working at the community planning, service and development level. It supports the development of strategies tailored to meet the purpose of the engagement activities and the needs of the residents and organizations.

Fortunately, we are seeing new energy from local governments, organizations and institutions to mobilize and engage the community in planning. Deep community engagement is complex and takes time. Traditional approaches, however, have been limited in their effectiveness at reaching a broad and

diverse group of community members. More in-depth community engagement is also challenging because it often forces community members, organizations and institutions to acknowledge and reconcile deep community racial, political, social and cultural divisions. The question of how to best address race, ethnicity and class given issues of language, resources and capacity will remain an ongoing challenge to implementing effective community engagement. Another challenge is the difficulty in translating long-term, macro-level policy and planning ideas into real-life discussions for the community. It is important to talk about issues such as land use, growth and zoning in a way that is relevant to people. Typical methods of showing detailed maps, involved data sets and 30-year timelines aren't compelling for many people.

Including a larger and more diverse range of community members in community planning requires local governments, institutions and organizations to commit to community engagement as a significant goal and component of planning - not simply to comply with public participation requirements. The goal is to foster a community's sense of attachment to the future, to expand access to and understanding of information and resources, to address inequities and to create opportunities for active roles in setting priorities, addressing issues and developing solutions. To do this, local governments, institutions, and organizations will need to implement new tools and strategies and step out of traditional "public meeting" comfort zones.

Our hope in creating the toolkit is that it will help bring people together, increase social justice, provide more effective public services and create a society of well-informed and active residents.

Each community brings its own unique resources, incentives, motivations and solutions. Although not meant to be exhaustive, this toolkit identifies new methods for engaging residents in planning and policy decisions – breaking out of traditional methods for engaging communities and focusing on residents who have been traditionally left out of planning and policy decisions. The toolkit draws from best practices implemented locally and nationally, including the joint work of Futurewise, El Centro de la Raza, InterIm CDA and OneAmerica through their project with Public Health – Seattle & King County.

The toolkit consists of:

Section 1: Introduction and Background
Section 2: Recommendations for Effective Community Engagement
Section 3: Description of Different Tools of Community Engagement
Tools (as attachments)

Importance of community engagement and participation

Public participation and community engagement is seen as a critical component of a healthy democracy. It is a requirement in many of our state statutes that local and state agencies enable the public to participate in the process of decision making in order to"

- strengthen the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions;
- empower local communities to be part of decision making, and thus, increase ownership in the decisions;
- build social cohesion by bringing people together around common causes and shared interests;
- improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services that are more in tune with people's needs;
- increase individuals' political efficacy and self-esteem; and
- create more collective action with residents, community organizations and local government.

In a world where government resources are only becoming more limited, local governments need to look past the short-term costs of community engagement and focus on long-term benefits, including leveraging the knowledge, experience and skills of community members and organizations to increase impact and foster greater resiliency in the community.

To achieve these benefits with the limited staff capacity and resources available in many cities and counties, community engagement efforts need to

- employ new tools and strategies that meet people where they are;
- have a broader reach that engages diverse segments of the community;
- build capacity in community organizations to partner in implementing activities; and
- be designed to sustain the work over time.

Overcoming barriers to engagement

While it is broadly understood that community engagement is necessary to good government and brings positive benefits to the community, it remains something that often feels out of reach for local government--especially engaging people for the long term, and engaging people who have historically not been represented, including people of color, people for whom English is not their primary language and youth.

Issues of power and inequality are central to understanding how and why people get involved and stay involved in local government processes. The uneven distribution of power, resources and bandwidth (time to attend meetings, time to stay engaged on issues, etc.) means that not everyone has access to the same opportunities for participation or derives the same benefits from participation.

Recognizing the role of power and privilege in shaping participation and engagement is a critical place to begin. For example, unequal access to information because of language barriers or incomprehensibility due to technical or academic presentation of information puts participants at a disadvantage. Other barriers are created when people around the table may not feel comfortable speaking up because of complex relationships and dynamics between participants. With our communities becoming even more diverse, it is imperative that local governments provide engagement tools that not only transcend cultural language barriers but also policy and planning language barriers.

There are also reasons why people do not participate that can be tackled more easily. Opportunities to participate need to complement people's lives and respond to people's needs, motivations and expectations. People juggle many competing demands for their time and attention. Episodic and less demanding forms of participation are likely to be more attractive to a greater number of people and need to be conducted in places where people already go, such as neighborhood or community events, local meetings, schools and grocery stores.

To be truly inclusive, facilitators need to be aware of and work to address the unequal distribution of power, social capital and other resources, particularly considering for community members their

- practical resources, such as time, money, access to transport, health limitations, childcare responsibilities;
- educational resources, such as an individual's skills, knowledge and experience; and
- social resources, such as their confidence and sense of efficacy in a political setting.

Barriers to Consider

- Ability of different stakeholders and community members to participate
- Hard to reach groups such as youth, senior residents, communities of color and socially excluded groups
- Gaps in information
- Feelings of distrust
- Literacy, language and cultural diversity
- Power dynamics and differences around race, age, gender and culture.

Design Issues to Consider

- Techniques and engagement methods used
- Need for independent facilitation
- Location and accessibility of the venue
- The number, type and reach of activities
- Transportation, childcare and other logistical needs
- Format and content of communication materials
- Use of interpreters and signers
- Methods used to enable all people to participate given power dynamics and circumstances (different ages, races, cultures, etc.)

Benefits of partnering with local organizations

Local governments and civic organizations can partner to foster community participation and engagement in a variety of ways. Smaller, grassroots, community-based organizations are not always experienced in local government planning processes. Rather, they are focused more on the day-to-day needs of their constituents, issue-specific campaigns and running their operations. These organizations can play a critical role in helping reach and engage participation of a broader group of residents who are most impacted by the planning and policy decisions of a local government.

Typically, local governments involve grassroots community-based organizations in a minimal way by asking them to distribute information about opportunities to participate in public planning and decision making or by attending community organizations' meetings to provide information about their planning processes and issues. A more effective and longer-term strategy is to work in a more comprehensive way with community organizations. Ideally, local governments will build long-term relationships with community-based organizations, building trust and capacity in each organization by partnering.

This starts with partnering with local community-based organizations to first develop the community engagement plan. Community organizations have a deep relationship with their community, a significant understanding of how best to relate with their community members and a high level of trust with their community members.   It includes inviting organizations to help design engagement tools based on their understanding of their members' needs, resources, capacity and interests. It also means working with community-based organizations to develop clear, understandable and culturally appropriate materials that allow community members to engage meaningfully. Finally, it includes asking community-based organizations to serve as liaisons to the their community to assist in implementation of a variety of engagement tools including surveys, focus groups, visioning workshops and community councils.

Providing resources to organizations to help with the participation and engagement is critical to success. Many community organizations have limited resources and are stretched to provide basic services to their members. When community-based organizations are welcomed into the engagement process, along with being provided sufficient funding resources, it can create the right conditions for people to participate and engage, and provide a positive experience that will encourage continued engagement and participation.

A special call out to youth engagement

Youth have been left out of public participation and engagement activities for too long. The engagement and participation of youth plays an influential role in instilling a culture of participation that will stay with them as they mature. Involving youth creates a gateway to leadership, community planning, communication skills and civic service activities. Because planning and policy decisions shape the future health of a community, the opinions of youth -- who will be that future -- become even more paramount.

The most successful youth events are planned, designed and led by the youth themselves with logistical and technical support from trusted advisors, local governments or organizations that specialize in youth outreach. Schools, after-school programs, community groups, community centers, faith-based organizations and other youth institutions and organizations provide opportunities for local governments to partner, encourage and support youth engagement.

A critical component of effective youth engagement is providing space that is separate from adult engagement activities. Youth feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and vision when they are with peers and not mixed with different ages, enabling them to speak more freely without concern for what others think and without concern that they won't be heard.

Youth engagement can be incorporated in a number of ways. Ideas to consider include photography and video projects culminating into a "youth said" event, poetry slam event, visioning workshops, asset mapping, SpeakOuts and youth summits led by and for youth.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The complex and dynamic nature of participation and engagement means there is no one policy or practice tool that will result in better participation and engagement—or even sustained participation and engagement. These recommendations begin to address many of the opportunities and barriers identified and can encourage more people to get involved, have a more positive experience and strengthen the impact of their participation.

Recommendation 1: Have a clear purpose.

Be clear about why you are engaging with the community and stakeholders, what type of participation is sought, how information gained from engagement will be used and for what objective. In developing a clear purpose statement for the engagement, ask the following questions:

- Why do you need to engage the community?
- What are the limitations of the community engagement effort (timeline, resources, bandwidth)?
- What are the limitations of the planning or project effort (timeline, resources, staff capacity)?
- What would successful community engagement look like?

Recommendation 2: Involve existing community organizations and groups.

For community members who historically have not participated in planning and project processes, local governments should consider reaching out to community-based organizations that represent them and inviting them to help develop or co-create community engagement plans. Most community-based organizations and groups have significant relationships in the larger community that can be leveraged to engage more people who may not be aware of the planning effort, may not know how to get involved or may be distrustful of planning efforts.

It is essential that local governments compensate community-based organizations for their services designing, planning and implementing community engagement and outreach. This process also helps build capacity within those organizations, which can be helpful for future planning efforts.

To better include community organizations in helping engage community members, create a list of community stakeholders with special consideration for people or groups who may be at risk of being excluded from participation. Consider the following questions when identifying stakeholders, organizations and groups:

- Who can influence decisions?
- Who are potential partners?

- Who will be impacted by the plan or project outcomes?
- Who are the beneficiaries?
- Who can slow or stop the planning or project?
- Who can make the community engagement, plan or project more effective?
- Who can contribute resources?
- Who is less likely to participate without significant effort and outreach?
- Are there gaps in information that can be filled through local knowledge?
- Are there existing community networks that can help with communication and outreach?

Recommendation 3: Provide flexible, genuine opportunities to engage and meet basic needs of participants.

Civic engagement is a luxury for many people. It is critical to know your community, understand and address the barriers that make it difficult for community members to participate and design different engagement activities to reach different audiences. Local governments should consider the following in implementing effective community engagement:

- Involve people early enough in the process to make a difference.
- Be genuine in the desire to engage people.
- Design engagement to fit people's everyday lives such as holding meetings after work hours and in the community (libraries, public plazas, locations near transit hubs, etc.), providing child care services and generally making it convenient.
- Provide opportunities that are social and enjoyable so people want to participate. Include food when appropriate.
- Provide different levels of engagement so those with little time or resources are able to provide input, while others who want to participate more deeply have that opportunity as well.

Recommendation 4: Let it be fun.

Many people are turned away from engaging when the experience takes too much effort or is boring. Instead, they are looking for ways to engage in a simple and enjoyable way without major responsibilities, long-term commitments or protracted debates. Consider engagement ideas that build social connections and draw people to the engagement activity. Local governments should consider some of the ideas presented in this toolkit but also challenge themselves to be creative and develop their own ideas.

Recommendation 5: Ensure there is value for participants.

In developing engagement tools, local governments should design approaches that are mutual and reciprocal. At the end of the engagement effort, all involved should feel that they both gave and received something of benefit from the

experience. People need to leave the experience feeling their involvement was valued by the convener and that they gained something from the process as far as social connections or greater understanding and learning.

Recommendation 6: Develop realistic expectations for the engagement.

Local government should acknowledge the engagement's limitations and develop realistic expectations of what can be achieved. Clarity about expectations will inform what sort of participatory activities are needed and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, distrust and disengagement.

Be clear and explicit about limitations, including timeframe, staff resources and financial constraints of the planning and public participation process. It is also important to be clear about these same limitations (staff resources and budget and financing constraints) for meeting the community's planning and investment needs. Some of these limitations may be challenged, so listening, preparing an explanation and knowing where there is flexibility are helpful.

Create a list of negotiable and non-negotiable factors for the planning or project effort. Negotiable factors are those that can be influenced and non-negotiable factors are those that have already been decided. Communicate these factors clearly from the beginning and throughout the community engagement process.

Finally, consider developing a clear set of commitments to community members and stakeholders as part of engagement. The commitments should communicate
- how often you will involve and inform the community during the process;
- how and when feedback will be available;
- how and when decisions will be made;
- how you will document, record, and share the ideas that are generated;
- how you will work with community members and/or stakeholders to find solutions to potential conflicts that may arise; and
- how community and stakeholder input will influence, contribute to and improve outcomes.

Making clear what outcomes can be expected helps reinforce participation and encourage stakeholders and community members to continue to be active as the process evolves. It also builds trust in the community for the local government.

Recommendation 7: Develop new leaders.

Community engagement is an opportunity to provide structured leadership development opportunities, move engaged individuals up an engagement ladder to build long-term social capital (i.e., collective value of all social networks), sustain efforts and achieve greater outcomes over time. Leadership

development should be part of any public involvement project's goals from the outset.

Recommendation 8: Provide skilled, culturally competent facilitators, translators, interpreters and representatives.

Ensuring community member participation starts with breaking down cultural barriers. Facilitators that are culturally and linguistically competent and skilled at listening is key. Surveys, questionnaires and interview questions should be designed to ensure content and methods are relevant to different cultures and groups and are translated into relevant languages. Given limited local government resources, this is another reason to ask existing community organizations for help with interpretation, translation and facilitation. They are almost always the best messengers and communicators within their own communities. In budgeting for community engagement, make sure to include funding for organizations who will perform the important interpretation, translation and facilitation work.

Recommendation 9: Show how community engagement influenced outcomes.

It is important to demonstrate at the end how community feedback was included in policy and planning development and provide an explanation when it is not. This goes a long way to reducing distrust, skepticism and the sense that time participating was wasted or futile. Specifically,

- provide regular feedback to all those involved, on the options, decisions, and actions that have been considered and agreed on;
- provide this feedback within an agreed time, in an agreed format and from an identified source;
- let participants know what difference their input has made and how their opinions are being considered and why some input was not incorporated;
- connect the outcomes with engagement efforts and thank people for participating; and
- provide details of any future activity.

DEPTHS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) proposes a spectrum of public participation (see Table 1) and provides a framework for analyzing the scope and depth of public participation. At one end of the spectrum, participation techniques may involve providing information through fact sheets and information booths, which leads to a shallow form of participation and a simple sharing of information. At the other end, resident engagement leads to decision making that is facilitated through techniques that create much deeper levels of participation and empowerment.

Table 1: Increasing the level of participation					
(*Items highlighted in blue are tools described in this toolkit*)					
	Inform	**Consult**	**Involve**	**Collaborate**	**Empower**
Public Participation Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout 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'll implement what you decided.	We will implement what you decided.
Example Techniques	Fact sheets Web sites Open houses	Public comment **Focus groups** **Surveys** Public meetings **SpeakOuts** **Pop-up visioning** **Walkshops/ bus tours** **Community mapping**	**Visioning workshops** Deliberative polling **Summit**	Resident advisory committees Consensus building Participatory decision making	**Advocacy training** Resident juries Resident budget - making Ballots Delegated decision

Modified from International Association for Public Participation

In this toolkit, we explore a number of different engagement techniques along the spectrum, their benefits and drawbacks and how and when to use them. The goal is to continue to expand this toolkit over time as new engagement techniques are tried and applied in the community planning context.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Stage 1: Scope

Step 1: Define purpose and objectives. *Scoping the purpose and objectives of the planning or project effort will provide clear direction on how the community engagement strategy will contribute to improved outcomes.*

Key Questions
- Why do you need to engage the community? Are you doing it to
  - gain new understanding?
  - improve policy or practice?
  - plan or rationalize services or change in services?
  - involve the community in meeting needs?
  - inform? (You are only going to tell people about the plan or the project.)
  - consult? (You will offer people restricted options to choose between.)
  - involve? (You wish to have the community influence choices and options for actions to make a shared decision.)
  - collaborate? (You will partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution.)
  - empower? (You will place final decision making in the hands of the public.)
- How will you explain the purpose?
- Why might the community want to engage with you?
- Are your interests the same as or different from the community's?
- How might the community react to your motives?
- Are you limited in your community engagement (timeline, resources, capacity)?
- What would successful community engagement look like?

Key Actions
- Define the purpose, aims and objectives of the community engagement strategy, including how it will inform planning, policy and project effort.
- Identify how the community engagement strategy links with the planning or project effort.
- Ensure the strategy meets public participation and process requirements.
- Define the responsibilities of local government staff as well as those of stakeholders and community organizations in regard to the community engagement strategy, including how engagement activities will be documented and reported on to support evaluation and meet statutory reporting requirements.

- Identify how information and feedback from engagement activities will be provided to participants, the larger community, stakeholders and decision makers.

Step 2: Understand community profile. *Understand who the community is, including those who experience barriers to engaging in planning, services and project efforts and the barriers themselves.*

Key Questions
- Who makes up the community?
- Who has not historically engaged in planning, services and project efforts?
- What community members are difficult to reach?
- Who can influence decisions?
- Who is not likely to participate without significant effort and outreach?
- Who will be impacted by the plan or project outcomes?
- Who are the beneficiaries?
- Who can slow or stop the planning or project?
- Are some voices louder and better organized than others? Could this exclude or disadvantage others?

Key Actions
- Review community data and profile information.
- Gather community information from public agency and community organization services providers who have developed needs assessments that include community profile information.
- Gather community information from organizations that work with and/or represent community members/groups who are most impacted by health, environment, housing and economic decisions.
- Develop profiles of community members who need to be reached along with key information that is relevant to engagement.

Step 3: Identify potential community partners and stakeholders. *Knowing the stakeholders and community-based organizations that represent critical community members is an important step. Mapping groups, organizations and networks can provide opportunities to tap into the local connections and networks that already exist, what works regarding engagement and outreach and what opportunities there are to work in partnership with existing organizations.*

Key Questions
- Who are potential community partners?
- Who can make the community engagement, plan or project more successful?
- Are there gaps in information that can be filled through local knowledge?
- Can existing community networks help with communication and outreach?

- Who can contribute resources?
- What resources are needed for these community organizations to partner and assist with community engagement and outreach?

Key Actions
- Identify community-based organizations that represent diverse constituencies in the community (youth, immigrant/refugee, seniors, cultural groups, etc.)
- Map community organizations and networks (key stakeholders and their roles) to identify potential partners, including their existing networks and relationships, their interests, their methods of outreach and levels of influence.
- Identify current engagement activities and actors to coordinate, learn from and leverage what is already occurring.
- Identify opportunities to work together with key community-based organizations in the development of the strategy.

Stage 2: Plan

Step 4: Develop priorities. *Keeping engagement activities focused on a few key priorities will keep the engagement program more effective and efficient.*

Key actions
- Reflect and review the purpose and objectives of the community engagement in light of the information obtained through Stage 1.
- Analyze any state law public participation requirements to inform the direction for community engagement.
- Engage with the community, community organizations and stakeholders to identify shared priority areas for joint engagement opportunities.
- Review current internal and external engagement activities and mechanisms with reference to the key strategic priorities and identify where changes may be required.
- Prioritize engagement of community members who have historically not participated, who are at risk of experiencing worse outcomes or who may have difficulty accessing services, such as marginalized and disadvantaged groups and populations.
- Work with community service organizations that deliver services to these members of the community.

Step 5: Identify mechanisms for engagement. *Develop mechanisms for engagement that are responsive to the local needs and the local community. There is no one–size-fits-all approach and it is important that mechanisms are tailored appropriately to engage all of the community.*

Key questions

Think about what commitments you can make to the community to build trust and encourage engagement. Can you agree to inform the community about

- how often you will inform them throughout the process?
- how and when feedback will be available?
- how and when decisions will be made?
- how you will listen to, record, and share the ideas that are generated?
- how you will work with community members and/or stakeholders to find solutions to issues that are identified?
- how community and stakeholder input influenced, contributed to or improved the project outcomes?

Key actions

- Determine what existing community engagement mechanisms have worked before and can be built upon and used, aligning with the strategic priorities and direction.
- Identify new mechanisms to be established for engaging the community, with reference to the purpose, objectives, timeframes and
  - input from local community organizations and the broader community about the most effective ways to engage to ensure it is accessible and inclusive of the diverse needs of the populations within the target group;
  - the degree of influence that the community will have on the outcomes and decision-making, and how this will be communicated to them;
  - how to engage with particular community members of the community who are at risk of experiencing worse outcomes or may have difficulty accessing services who traditionally do not engage through formal community engagement mechanisms; and
  - whether purpose is to inform, consult, involve, collaborate or empower.
- Identify innovative ways of engaging with individuals and groups outside traditional methods.

Step 6: Develop outcome and performance measures. *Develop strategic outcomes and performance measures for the community engagement strategy. Historically, engagement outcomes have been focused on measuring outputs such as how many people were reached and how much media coverage was generated. While this information is good to capture, it is equally important to focus on measuring outcomes based upon the effectiveness of the engagement.*

Key actions

- Develop key indicators to measure
  - how engagement with the community has contributed to or changed one or more of the following: policies, service delivery, planning and design, service monitoring and evaluation;

- how the engagement and input from the community led to outcomes such as
  - improved outcomes at individual, service, facility, neighborhood or community level;
  - improved quality of services;
  - improved communication;
  - more efficient services and use of resources;
  - more targeted service delivery to a particular population;
  - increased civic literacy of community members to become more active partners in civic government;
  - more accessible services;
  - more equitable distribution of benefits and burdens;
  - improved timeliness of services and support to residents; and
- how the engagement mechanism/activity engaged with the right people to match the objectives and purpose.

Stage 3: Engage

Step 7: Implement.

Key actions
- Identify and establish systems to record and capture information on the implementation of the community engagement against key performance indicators.

Stage 4: Review

Step 8: Monitor, review and evaluate. *Measure performance throughout engagement to determine what tweaks and changes in the plan need to be made—learning, evaluating and improving as the community engagement plan is implemented. Address issues that arise in implementation.*

Key actions
- Identify how review and evaluation processes are built into each engagement activity and mechanism and how they link to and inform the engagement strategy implementation.
- Identify how evaluation and continuous improvement mechanisms are built into the community engagement strategy to continuously improve engagement.
- Identify how the community is involved in monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the strategy and how the evaluation mechanism is tailored to meet the needs of the people being engaged.

- Identify how the community provides feedback and evaluation of how they were engaged.

Step 9: Report. *Reporting is a critical stage which allows the engagement results to be shared with participants and decision makers.*

Key actions
- Report on the community engagement plan, outlining achievements against the purpose and objectives in the community engagement plan as well as lessons learned.

TOOLS

We have developed a series of community engagement tools which were piloted in the cities of Seattle, Kent and Tukwila in 2014. Descriptions of these tools are included below, organized based on the spectrum of public participation shown in Table 1, along with photos of their implementation in the community.

INFORM AND CONSULT TOOLS

Inform and consult tools are used to obtain public feedback on analysis of issue(s) and potential alternatives or final decisions related to planning, policies and projects. The intent is to keep community members informed, listen to and record their concerns, answer their questions, acknowledge their hopes and concerns and provide feedback on how their input influenced or will influence decisions. The strategies below engage community members through informing and consulting.

Strategy 1: Community Walkshops

Walkshops are interactive walking tours of neighborhoods and are used to engage people more deeply in their neighborhoods. Participants walk with a guide, a map, a camera or their phone. Participants identify the elements they like, as well as challenges and opportunities. Walks can include local business owners and experts in the field of transportation, architecture, urban planning, public space and economic development.

Walkshops create an informal and interactive way for participants to share stories about living in their neighborhood and communicate community needs and values through words, drawings and photos. Walkshops can be as simple as walks in the neighborhood or more complex (by using conversation, neighborhood assessments, and mapping tools). Walks can be general or they can be based on selected themes related to neighborhood issues (e.g. community building, open space and art, food and health, natural environment, transportation, housing, public safety and business development).

A version of the walkshop is a bus tour or bikeshop, where members use a chartered bus, public transit or bicycle to explore different parts of the community, looking at planning and project issues with an on-the-ground appreciation and understanding.

Youth Element. With materials, training and support, youth can conduct their own walkshops and collect photos and video for a project of their own. Photos with captions can be presented at a culminating event and to policy makers at committee meetings and hearings. Photos can also be displayed in the community at libraries, community centers and other locations.

Project Steps

1. Develop goals for walkshops.
2. Identify relevant community-based organizations and establish partners.
3. Establish a calendar for walkshops, identifying neighborhoods, dates, times and meeting locations.
4. Write up descriptions of the walkshops, including routes/maps.
5. Develop announcements and disseminate to neighborhood organizations, businesses, community organizations, etc.
6. Develop signage and handout maps for participants and secure extra cameras.
7. Provide snacks and consider having a speaker present for the break.
8. Place photos from walkshops on the planning/project website or social media and allow people to upload their own photos and comments.

Seattle Walkshop, summer 2014

See Appendix A, Community Walkshop Tools
1. Seattle Walkshop flyer and handout July 2014

Strategy 2: SpeakOuts

SpeakOuts are innovative, engaging and interactive staffed exhibitions/booths. They are open houses plus informal and interactive public meetings designed for structured "drop-in" participation by community members. Participants come to a SpeakOut exhibit/booth at a venue (e.g., neighborhood event, local park, transit hub, festival) and find the issues they care about and provide input.

Participants at SpeakOut, Seattle, May 2014

SpeakOuts provide flexibility in the level and timing of engagement. They can be used in the beginning of the planning process to introduce a planning effort and generate early participation or they can be used at the end of a planning process to test outcomes. SpeakOuts can be designed for short brief engagement opportunities or longer discussions with people stopping in to engage on one issue or on many. They can be effective when wide community participation is sought and a less structured time format is desired. They can be easily moved around a community, which reduces many of the barriers to engagement and can attract a great deal more interest than the typical public meeting.

Common Elements

SpeakOuts are organized around local issues, with a number of issue stalls set up that relate to results of community surveys, topics of concern or to specific project goals. For example, a Comprehensive Planning process may be organized around issue stalls that include

- transportation;
- community assets;
- housing;
- health;
- local business;
- parks and recreation;
- community safety;
- what matters to youth; and
- how to get involved.

SpeakOuts can require significant staffing resources or a minimal amount. A heavily resourced SpeakOut will have a trained Listener and a trained Recorder in each issue stall. The Listener pays close attention to what a participant is saying and asks relevant questions while the Recorder writes down the person's comments. This approach involves a heavily focused one-on-one listening session. Over time, the walls of the SpeakOut stall will be covered with the community's views as recorded by the recorder. A less resource-intensive approach involves providing information in each issue stall with key questions for people to provide feedback in a simple, less time-intensive way. The latter approach engages more people but gains less richness of information.

For SpeakOuts, the organizers go to places where people are already gathering rather than asking people to come to them. Locations can be places where people naturally congregate (i.e., a local park or heavily trafficked retail space) or when people are coming together for special events (community fair, soccer tournament, PTA meeting) so that people who are just passing by have the opportunity to participate as well as those who are invited.

Participants in SpeakOuts build on the ideas and comments generated by others and posted on the walls. They provide a non-threatening, informal and fun space for people of all ages, backgrounds and opinions to participate in decision making.

Youth Element

 A SpeakOut is well-suited for reaching youth. In the most successful SpeakOuts, a separate space is created where techniques like drawing, model building, idea boxes and wish trees, are used for gathering participant's opinions and hopes for the future. If room is limited, adding a panel that engages youth provides a way for them to participate while their parents are interacting with the "adult" components.

Youth panel at Tukwila "Touch-a-Truck" SpeakOut, July 2014

Best Practices

Promote the SpeakOut.   Effective SpeakOuts are well-advertised in the community to generate interest and good turnout or they occur at large community events where significant turnout is expected. When the SpeakOut is not part of a community event, advertisement should be part of the planning and budget. Advertisement can be done through postcard drops, newspaper ads, online, billboards, flyers distributed through schools and other organizations, posters and word of mouth. It is best to start advertising about a month ahead of time and then reinforce using different methods up to the day of the event.

Provide simple instructions.   Clearly label stalls and include legible prompts (questions to think about or answer) as well as photos, maps, or other visual prompts mounted on panel).   Any interactive exercises require clear, plain-

language instructions that are displayed prominently. When it gets crowded, staff are unable to have direct interaction with everyone.   Thus, it is important for participants to be able to go through the entire SpeakOut with no staff interaction, if needed.

Offer incentives. It is helpful to offer an incentive to participation as well as have a friendly and welcoming person staffing each stall. When competing with other booths that are offering free giveaways, it is quite effective to offer your own. We found that free balloons (at kid-friendly events) and free lemonade or free face painting resulted in people lining up to participate in our SpeakOuts.

Provide translation.   In order to reach audiences that might not normally be included in public participation processes, it is critical that all materials be available in relevant languages, including SpeakOut panels.
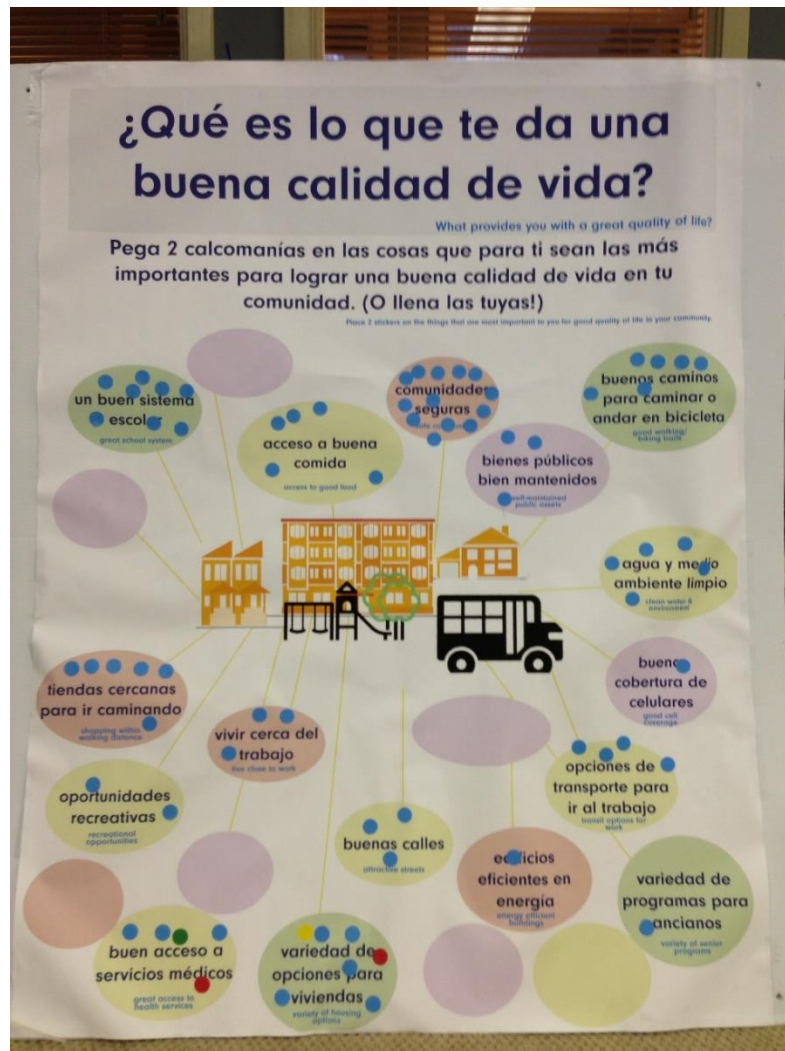
Spanish Panel ("Quality of Life") at Hispanic SeaFair, July 2014

Project Steps

1. Establish a calendar for SpeakOuts, identifying date, time and locations.
   a. Focus on events or opportunities that attract your target audience.
2. Reserve event locations.
   a. Location space is often limited – especially at community festivals. SpeakOuts can be facilitated in spaces as small as 10X10 but larger spaces can provide a more open and inviting environment for participants.
   b. There is usually a fee for booth space.
   c. Spaces at popular events sell out well in advance.
3. For stand-alone SpeakOuts that are not part of a community event, develop an announcement and disseminate through community organizations, media, postcard drops, ads, flyers, etc.
4. Recruit volunteers and staff to host each station in the SpeakOut.
   a. Ideally plan for at least two hosts at each station.
   b. Plan and schedule host shifts. The one-on-one engagement can be very tiring and building in breaks for hosts is important.
5. Plan the number and design for stalls based on issues, questions being asked, visuals, etc. Big colorful graphics and images that include playful ways to interact are most effective.
   a. Review drafts with the staff who will receive the final reports to ensure that key issues are adequately addressed by the content included on panels.
   b. Create different types of panels that require different engagement strategies and actions; e.g. place a sticker on a graph, write down an answer to a question, place stickers on favorite photos and draw a picture.
   c. Be sure to use as little text as possible and make all stations self-explanatory.
6. Provide incentive to attract people to the booth, e.g. healthy foods, lemonade, balloons, face painting and giveaways.
7. On day of:
   a. Allow at least two hours to set up. SpeakOuts are much more complicated to set up than normal outreach booths.
   b. Train staff and volunteers with a walk-through of all activities.
   c. Be flexible. Often, the panels and configuration will end up being different than planned due to space configurations, adjacent booths and other unforeseen factors. Sometimes a planned panel does not work well and needs to be reworked on the spot.
   d. Take photos! Photo documentation of the SpeakOut in action can be used after the event in a wide variety of ways.

Participants at SpeakOut Booth in Kent, July 2014

See Appendix B, SpeakOut Tools
1. *SpeakOut Tukwila July 2014*
2. *SpeakOut Tukwila Aug 2014 (Spanish)*
3. *SpeakOut Seattle May 2014*
4. *SpeakOut Seattle July 2014*
5. *SpeakOut Seattle Aug 2014*
6. *SpeakOut Seattle Aug 2014 (Spanish)*
7. *SpeakOut Kent July 2014*
8. *TComprehensive Plan element names translated*

Strategy 3: Surveys

Surveys are useful tools for reaching a broad array of community members who need flexibility and may be less likely to engage in an activity with a longer time commitment. Surveys can be focused on a particular issue or segment of the community (e.g. business owners, service providers or specific neighborhoods,). Survey results are analyzed and included as background information in reports, as well as used to help shape policies and recommendations.

Surveys can include qualitative open-ended questions to solicit narrative responses about values and issues of concern. Some include quantitative questions on topics of housing, economic development, cultural inclusion, transportation and community safety. Surveys can be completed either through private survey firms (which helps ensure accuracy of the data and reported sample of the community) or can be more informal and completed in person through door-to-door canvassing efforts, at key places in the community or online through an web-based survey tool.

Hiring trusted community members or organizations representing different constituencies allows local governments to utilize organizing techniques relevant to the communities surveyed and ensure that the work is genuinely multicultural. Having face-to-face multilingual surveyors who spend time one-on-one to explain the survey, its objectives and purpose and the value of residents participating ensures greater success at including the voices of people traditionally not represented. During the survey, participants can express themselves verbally or in writing in their own language and in places comfortable to them (e.g., coffee shops, mosques, churches and community spaces).

Youth Element. Surveying is a great tool to learn more from youth about their concerns, needs, hopes and ideas. When youth-led, surveys are also a good way to build leadership, teach outreach skills and develop social skills. Youth can and should help develop, design and implement the survey questions.

Project Steps

1. Decide key survey outcomes and target audience.
2. If possible, gather information about the survey location or target audience before starting. For example, if surveying in a business district, find out the best hours to approach the owners and/or customers.
3. Draft survey questions, have staff or volunteers who are familiar with the target audience review them and pre-test with the target audience. Removing jargon, complicated language, and leading questions often takes a number of rounds of edits.
4. Translate surveys based on assessment of most prevalent languages spoken in community. Often, the local school district can provide a list of the top languages spoken in the community. Hire local community members or community organizations to perform translation services.
5. If possible, implement survey using a variety of modes including online, in-person, telephone, door to door canvassing and at central community locations (stores, community centers, etc.) in order to reach more people.
6. Recruit and schedule staff and volunteers to implement in-person surveys. After several days of surveying, check in to assess if changes in the survey or in the mode of deployment are needed.
7. If possible, provide an incentive that is meaningful for the target audience such as a chance to win a gift certificate or another gift for survey participants.

See Appendix C, Survey Tools
1. *Tukwila Business Survey July 2014*
2. *Kent Community Survey Aug 2014 (including Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Somali)*

Strategy 4: Focus Groups/Focus Workshops

Mainstream public involvement efforts are less effective in reaching historically under-represented communities if they don't include partnering with strong organizations and leaders with trusted relationships in the community. Online polls, surveys, walkshops, SpeakOuts and other engagement tools have limitations in accurately reflecting constituencies that are traditionally hard to reach. Focus groups and small focus workshops led or co-led by local community organizations present opportunities to inform residents about planning, policy or project efforts and to learn about concerns. They can also provide the opportunity for facilitators

to gain a deeper understanding of challenges and potential strategies needed to address participant concerns. The focus group/focus workshop questions can be used to initiate continued engagement and deeper dialogue. During the focus groups/focus workshops, facilitators should discuss expectations about how participants' feedback will be used. Participants should understand that providing feedback does not guarantee change but is part of the process to identify community needs and may or may not result in local government action. Focus groups can be organized based on cultural background, neighborhood or age, and can provide an opportunity for both quantitative and qualitative feedback.

Focus workshop, Tukwila, December 2014

Youth Element. Youth focus groups/workshops provide a way to hear about their concerns, ideas and visions for the future. Youth can and should help develop, design, coordinate and lead the focus groups or focus workshops. Focus groups/workshops with youth participants and youth leaders can achieve a deeper dialogue that provides valuable information to local government and builds youth leadership, social cohesion and data analysis skills.

Project Steps

1. Decide key outcomes and target audience.
2. Identify and partner with a local community-based organization with strong relationships in the community of interest.
3. Schedule the focus group or focus workshop in a location that is convenient for community members and at a time and day of week that is appropriate. For example, for retirees, weekday mornings or afternoons often work well. For immigrant and refugee populations, Friday night or Saturday afternoon might work well, as those times provide the least conflict with working hours.
4. Create a facilitator guide with details about how the workshop will be run and key questions. Provide ample time to brainstorm and edit this document.
5. Organize logistics such as childcare and food. Providing a meal and having time for socializing in advance (30 minutes) works well for some communities.
6. Invite attendees. Working with a local partner makes this much easier as they will have good contacts in the community. Sometimes it is necessary to call a large number of people in order to gain enough attendees. The ideal number ranges between 10 and 18 participants, depending on the number of questions planned (fewer questions for larger number of participants).
7. It is critical to provide a stipend. Most commonly, $50 or $75 cash is offered. Gift cards to grocery stores or coffee shops also work well. At the workshop, inform participants that stipends will be provided at the end of the event. Be sure to have pre-printed receipts that participants can sign as they pick up their stipends.
8. The facilitator should be a trained and competent facilitator. Ideally the facilitator is not an involved party in the issue being discussed. The facilitator should provide no opinions during the workshop but should strictly be in facilitation mode.
9. A note taker (or two) are needed to record notes during the workshop and to prepare a transcript afterwards. Recording of the workshop is standard practice and participants must be informed of the taping. Transcripts are written with no names of the participants, but sometimes are written with brief descriptors such as "female, aged 50."

10. Other staff are generally not present for the workshop as it is preferable for workshop participants to feel like they are not being "observed" in order to gain more honest feedback and opinions.
11. Depending on the situation, sending workshop notes to the participants afterwards helps build trust and future participation in other outreach and engagement activities.

See Appendix D, Focus Workshop Tools
1. *Kent Community Focus Workshop Facilitation Guide, October 2014*
2. *East African Community Workshop Facilitation Guide, November 2014*

Strategy 5: Pop-Up Visioning

Another approach that we did not pilot but we feel has strong appeal is Pop-up Visioning. Pop-up visioning is an innovative technique for reaching community members in a fun, easy way. It creates an opportunity to engage people informally on topics relevant to their neighborhood. People are empowered to take action on local issues without significant effort and in a fun way that makes them want to engage further. It works at a neighborhood level by asking a simple question: "What can improve this neighborhood?" A simple method is the use of sticky notes or posters for people to write their thoughts in a public space, such as a vacant storefront window. Participants tend to build upon answers they already see posted. A more involved approach uses a leading question and provides space and time for community members to talk, thus creating opportunities to think big, think bold, gather ideas and to work together to make things happen.


Photos of Pop-up Visioning approaches from across the globe

Strategy 6: Community Mapping

Community mapping uses maps and photographs of an area or specific location to illustrate how people view their area, what they like or dislike and improvements they would like to see implemented. Ideas are generated in small group discussions and recorded on post-its or pre-prepared cards. Discussions are facilitated to help explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict. Specific challenges can be posed that groups have to wrestle with, such as where growth should be placed, the size and shape of buildings and the location of basic amenities and those less desired (e.g. waste facilities, and substations). While we did not pilot this technique, it appears that community mapping can be an effective way to engage people of all ages and interests. There are two common approaches to implement a community mapping activity:

- Create a large map that can be laid on the floor so people can engage in a fun and interactive way, by walking on and around it and marking elements or placing icons on it.
- Guided walks of the area to develop visual photographs of things people like and those they want addressed that can be brought back and used in the mapping exercise.
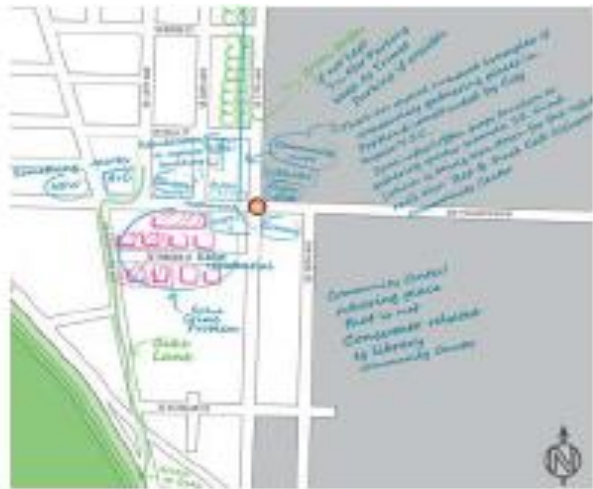
Photos of community mapping activities

INVOLVE AND COLLABORATE TOOLS

Strategy 7: Visioning Workshops

Visioning is a process that facilitates community members imagining the future they want, and planning how to achieve it. Community visioning workshops are a key step in the strategic planning process and begin with an initial scan of the area's demographic, economic, social and fiscal trends. Next the community considers where the community *should* be headed, outlining their core values and vision for the future and developing a manageable and feasible set of community goals and an action plan.

Visioning workshops can be very large and involve thousands of people over an extended period of time, or much smaller. The size of the visioning session is often based on the capacity and resources of the organization leading the effort.

Another approach can be workshops which focus on solutions. Community members often express frustration that they are always being asked about their concerns and issues, rather than their ideas for solutions. Visioning workshops can provide that avenue.

Project Steps

Visioning workshops follow the same steps as Focus Groups/Focus Workshops (page 34). A key addition, however, is that more research is needed in advance to identify community concerns and issues and to assess community conditions. This provides a basis upon which the community visioning can occur.

In the case of our pilot, we conducted a series of workshops within communities. The 1st workshop focused on community concerns. The 2nd workshop looked at potential solutions (visioning). In the 3rd workshop, we discussed potential policy language for comprehensive plans that addressed community concerns and provided other presentations about major issues (e.g., community safety discussion with the mayor) as well as advocacy training (How to speak in front of city council).

See Appendix E, Visioning Workshop Tools

1. *Tukwila International Boulevard Small Business Visioning Workshop Facilitation Guide, Fall 2014*
2. *East African Community Solutions Workshop Facilitation Guide, December 2014*
3. *Kent Community Solutions Workshop Facilitation Guide, November 2014*

Strategy 8: Summits

Summits are a larger engagement strategy that focuses on fostering the skills, opportunities, and authentic relationships that help people engage more richly for a longer period of time in issues in the community. Summits are intended to be inclusive events focused on particular issues, sets of issues or on particular community demographic groups.

For example, a youth summit presents the opportunity to create an environment where youth groups can network, learn from other young people, and discuss what future opportunities they see for their community. Students receive hands-on training to create action plans for implementation. A summit can dismantle barriers to youth leadership by providing interactive workshops that allow youth to practice communication, advocacy and facilitation skills. It can also showcase the work and outcomes of participating youth groups in order to increase respect for youth voices and provide the opportunity for youth and adults to learn more about what young people need and want in their communities.

Finally, it can provide workshops that develop the interpersonal skills, communication and self-confidence that enable youth to thrive despite the difficulties and challenges of their social environment.

Breakout session panel at Seattle Youth Summit, October 2014

See Appendix F, Community Summit Tools

1. *Seattle Youth Summit detailed agenda, October 2014*

EMPOWER TOOLS

Strategy 9: Advocacy Training

In order to empower community members to participate in government planning processes and, importantly, to communicate directly with decision makers and elected officials, training is needed. Often this is termed "advocacy training" although a large component is public speaking training and facilitation.

Mainstream community members can be nervous and ill-prepared to speak in front of city and county councils at public hearings and meetings. For communities that have traditionally not participated in planning processes, this

task can be even more daunting due to language barriers, distrust of government or past experiences of discrimination. Further, in many countries, publicly giving your opinion to government is not possible or forbidden and thus recent immigrants may be highly reluctant to speak at public meetings. It is important therefore to provide training directly or to provide funding to community organizations to provide training in a variety of topics, including:

- "Civics 101;"
- How a bill gets passed;
- How to testify in front of city council;
- Telling your story in 2 minutes; and
- How to speak to legislators.

While an online webinar or downloadable video can suffice, an in-person training that includes role-playing is ideal.

See Appendix G, Advocacy Training Tools
1. *Advocacy Training: How to speak in front of city council, Kent, December 2014*

Strategy 10: Participatory Budget Making
Participatory budgeting is a different way to manage public money and to engage people in government processes. It is a democratic approach in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. It enables taxpayers to work with government staff and decision makers to make the budget decisions that affect their lives. Most participatory budgeting work has taken place at the city level, for the municipal budget, but it has also been used for counties, states, housing authorities, schools and school systems, universities, coalitions and other public agencies.

Process
Though each participatory budgeting experience is different, most follow a similar basic process.

- Community is surveyed and community members brainstorm spending priorities and ideas.
- Volunteer budget delegates meet and develop budget proposals based on the spending priorities and ideas developed and within budget means.
- Residents vote on proposals.
- Government implements the budget decisions.

To learn more: http://www.participatorybudgeting.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/citylevelpbmemo1.pdf

Appendices

Appendices are included as separate downloadable files

Appendix A. Community Walkshop Tools

- **Seattle Walkshop flyer and handout July 2014**

Appendix B. SpeakOut Tools

- **SpeakOut Tukwila July 2014**
- **SpeakOut Tukwila Aug 2014 (Spanish)**
- **SpeakOut Seattle May 2014**
- **SpeakOut Seattle July 2014**
- **SpeakOut Seattle Aug 2014**
- **SpeakOut Seattle Aug 2014 (Spanish)**
- **SpeakOut Kent July 2014**
- **Comprehensive Plan element names translated**

Appendix C. Survey Tools

- **Tukwila Business Survey July 2014**
- **Kent Community Survey Aug 2014 (including Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Somali)**

Appendix D. Focus Workshop Tools

- **Kent Community Focus Workshop Facilitation Guide, October 2014**
- **East African Community Focus Workshop Facilitation Guide, November 2014**

Appendix E. Visioning Workshop Tools

- **Kent Community Solutions Workshop Facilitation Guide, November 2014**
- **East African Community Solutions Workshop Facilitation Guide, November 2014**
- **Tukwila International Boulevard Small Business Visioning Workshop Facilitation Guide, December 2014**

Appendix F. Community Summit Tools

- **Seattle Youth Summit Agenda, October 2014**

Appendix G. Advocacy Training Tools

- **Advocacy Training: How to speak in front of city council. Kent, December 2014**