Sustainable Neighborhood Network

Engaging Diverse Audiences in the Sustainable Neighborhoods Program: A Best Practices Guide

SustainableNeighborhoodNetwork.org/information/BestPracticesGuide

Denver's Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency Best Practices for Equitable Community Engagement

Meetings/Timing: The specific timing of meetings (i.e., time of day and day of the week) should reflect experience with past turnout, and should be informed by community connectors, community feedback, and agency experience. Also be aware of meeting fatigue – between work, school, and other obligations people are asked to participate in a lot of meetings, so make sure yours is timely and provides a call to action and/or a benefit to those you are asking to participate.

Meetings/Notice: Notice should include location, time, duration, and available incentives (including interpretation services, participant compensation, childcare, and food offered). Let people know in advance and provide reminders.

Meetings/Outreach Methods: Methods used should be determined on a case-by-case basis considering the impact, available funding, data, and other information about which channels are most effective to reach specific communities. Posting online, in-person, using culturally appropriate language, and providing translated materials should always be considered.

Different Ways to Receive Community Input: Recognizing that communities have wide-ranging digital literacy skills and technology access, different methods for receiving input might include in-person meetings, virtual and online meetings, online comment portals, emails, providing written comment via sticky notes, and other written methods.

Methods for Organizations & Agencies to Receive Community Input:
Facilitation at a meeting

- Make sure everyone clearly understands the goals and the process
- Create a space where everyone feels respected and safe to share
- Keep asking for clarification
- Assign notetakers
- Keep time to allow everyone to participate
- Be flexible
- Provide people with a place to provide input, email, phone, one-on-one options

Considerations for when selecting in-person meeting locations: Physical accessibility, public transportation options, a location people are comfortable coming to/feel welcomed at.

Rapid Needs Assessments

Rapid Needs Assessments aim to get a snapshot understanding of key information to help guide project or program design.

In Denver's Rapid Needs Assessments, staff engaged residents, youth, and institutional partners in 10 neighborhoods to understand each neighborhood's (1) Most Urgent Issues, (2) Priority Needs, and (3) Major Barriers related to climate change, sustainability, and resiliency.

Denver works with a local vendor (E.g., registered neighborhood organization, community-based organization, non-profit service provider, etc.) to co-design the process. During each meeting (Meetings 2, 3, and 4), participants are asked to share their ideas and feelings about the neighborhood's most urgent issue, priority needs, and major barriers. The facilitator gets this input from each participant while the notetaker documents each response for all to see (E.g., a large sticky note at the front of the room). As participants answer each question, the facilitator and notetaker continuously check in for clarification so that responses are understood, and similar responses can be grouped together to highlight common themes. If time allows, participants are invited to vote for what they feel are the neighborhood's top 1-3 most urgent issues, priority needs, and major barriers. This can be done going one-by-one and tallying votes, or by inviting participants to come up to place 1-3 stickers next to their vote.

Content compiled from presentation by Taylor Moellers, Sustainable Neighborhoods Manager | City and County of Denver Office of Climate Action, Sustainability and Resiliency