

CITIZEN

ENGAGEMENT

TECHNIQUES

Before You Begin Checklist



Engaging citizens can be an exciting experience. Many city officials want to jump right in and start connecting with citizens. While that enthusiasm is a must for effective citizen engagement, taking time to plan before engaging citizens will produce better, longer-lasting results.

Below is a checklist of steps that city staff should take before using any of the engagement techniques. These steps will help city staff manage citizen expectations, choose the most applicable citizen engagement technique(s) to implement, grow an informed citizenry, and make it easier for citizens to take action.

- Choose a public problem on which to focus your citizen engagement work. Be sure to choose a problem that can benefit from citizen experiences and ideas and cannot be easily solved internally.
- Identify 3-5 goals for your citizen engagement work. These goals should be related to the chosen problem.
- Make sure you have support from your mayor or chief city executive to solve the chosen problem, engage citizens in your efforts, and implement citizen solutions.
- Assemble an internal working group or secure support from colleagues whose assistance, involvement, and advocacy will be needed.
- Identify the primary stakeholders to engage, including residents, volunteers, and community organizations as appropriate.
- Determine how many citizens you will engage to ensure that you have a representative sample of service users. Qualtrics can provide helpful guidance on how to set a goal for a scientific sample size: <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/calculating-sample-size/>.

Complete each step to the best of your ability in the order that makes the most sense for your work. Changes may be necessary as additional information is gathered throughout the process.

- Decide who will facilitate the engagement (city staff only or city staff with partners).
- Based on the primary stakeholders, identify participation accommodations that may be needed, such as childcare, transportation, food, and an accessible location.
- Outline parameters or constraints that citizens need to be informed of, such as budget limitations, legal requirements, and deadlines, and plan to share these before or during engagement.
- Identify starting and ending points for the engagement, along with key milestones in between.
- Draft a communications plan for all stakeholders.
- Create a plan to evaluate the engagement, including a brief questionnaire to allow each participant to give anonymous feedback. Include demographic information in the plan to make sure you are reaching key stakeholders.
- Make a plan to integrate the results of the engagement into existing plans to solve the chosen problem.
- Prepare a budget for the engagement work.

Once you have completed all of the steps above, you will be ready to review and select the most applicable engagement technique(s). We encourage you to contact Cities of Service if you would like assistance at info@citiesofservice.org.