Engaged Communities are Thriving Communities: Key Engagement Principles and Tools
Overview

• About NCL
• Current context
• What we mean by engagement and why it matters
• Engagement examples and impact
• Key principles to consider for any engagement effort
The mission of the National Civic League is to advance civic engagement to create inclusive, thriving communities.

Programs
• All-America City Award
• Community Assistance
• Racial Equity
• Research and Publications
  • National Civic Review

Founded in 1894 by Teddy Roosevelt and other reformers
Current Context

• Talk of division and distrust can make it seem like we aren’t able to work together anymore.

• Never been a more important time to stand up for the values that make communities strong

• Need to bridge divide and build community
What do we mean by engagement

Different from educating the public, marketing our solutions or effectively communicating about our programs and efforts
Engagement vs. other ways we interact with the public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communications, and Marketing</th>
<th>Community Engagement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have information that the public wants or needs to know</td>
<td>The public has information that we want or need to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We speak from a position of authority and expertise</td>
<td>We recognize and learn from the public’s authority and expertise in matters that impact their lives.</td>
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When do we need to engage

Engagement is critical when:

• You want/need to understand what people value
• You are making a decision that requires choices and trade-offs that impact people’s lives
• You are making a decision that may be controversial

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Relevance for city leaders

• Avenue to build trust and public support on difficult issues

• Surface previously unknown groups and leaders

• When asked to do more with less, engagement can reveal new opportunities

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Tallahassee, Florida
Fort Collins, Colorado: Building a culture of engagement.
Key Engagement Principles
Key Engagement Principles

1. Start with a learning mindset
2. Engage and reflect the diversity of the community
3. Engagement is relational not transactional
4. Set reasonable expectations and deliver
Start with a learning mindset

• Curiosity is critical

• Engagement’s goal is to learn not just to confirm

• Everyone is an expert in their own experience

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Engage and reflect the diversity of the community

- Learning about the community means engaging the full diversity of the community

- Engaging across racial, religious and ethnic divides is critical to building stronger communities

- Make it comfortable for the community, not just yourself
Engagement is relational not transactional

• Building trust takes time, it is an ongoing endeavor
• Don’t just show up when you need something
• Like a relationship, honesty and respect can make or break engagement efforts
• Tension and emotion are signs of success

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Set reasonable expectations and deliver

• Be open and honest about the purpose of the conversation and key constraints

• Be clear about how you will use what you learn

• You have an obligation to follow up with people to let them know what you learned and how you used it

• Use and share what you’ve learned with other staff

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Local implications

• How might what we’ve discussed fit with challenges you face in your own community?
Engagement Support from NCL

- NCL works with communities to develop and facilitate resident-led community visioning or strategic planning efforts
- NCL works with communities and others to develop engagement plans and strategies
- NCL leads local engagement trainings
- All-America Conversations Toolkit
For more information

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Join the Breakout Session
1:30 – 2:30

Bridging Divides, Building Communities: Deeper Dive into All-America Conversations Meeting Toolkit

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