



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



National Civic League

Founded in 1894 by Teddy Roosevelt and other reformers

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*



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

Communications, and Marketing	Community Engagement
We have information that the public wants or needs to know	The public has information that we want or need to know
We speak from a position of authority and expertise	We recognize and learn from the public's authority and expertise in matters that impact their lives.



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



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



Hampton, Virginia



Tallahassee, Florida



Fort Collins, Colorado





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



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



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



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

Sarah Lipscomb –
sarahl@ncl.org

Join the Breakout Session

1:30 – 2:30

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

www.nationalcivicleague.org