Making Better Decisions Through Community Engagement

NACO Annual Conference
Thursday, December 9, 2021

Presented by Charlotte Narjes and Jordan Rasmussen
Rural Prosperity Nebraska-Nebraska Extension
Overview

• What is community engagement?
• Why is community engagement important?
• The community engagement spectrum
• Activity: Reflections on engagement in your county
• Call to action
• Questions
What is engagement?

“Any process that involves the community in problem-solving or decision making and uses community input to make better decisions.”

*Beyond Public Meetings: Connecting Community Engagement with Decision-Making*
What engagement is not?

Simply obtaining agreement on a predetermined outcome.

*It is about allowing better decisions to be made.*

*Beyond Public Meetings: Connecting Community Engagement with Decision-Making*
Engagement in your county

What engagement techniques has your county government used to engage the community?

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Why community engagement?

Community engagement

- facilities understanding,
- creates more sustainable decisions,
- and identifies critical issues early.

*It acknowledges the human desire to have a say on those issues that affect us.*
## Engagement spectrum

### Increasing Level of Public Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th>Consult</th>
<th>Involve</th>
<th>Collaborate</th>
<th>Empower</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide stakeholders with balanced</td>
<td>To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information</td>
<td>To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood.</td>
<td>To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision from development to solution.</td>
<td>Shared leadership of community-led projects with final decision-making at the community level.</td>
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<tr>
<td>and objective information to assist them</td>
<td>to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and/or</td>
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<tr>
<td>in understanding the problem, alternatives</td>
<td>solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>and solution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Here's what's happening.</td>
<td>Here's what's happening.</td>
<td>Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?</td>
<td>Let's work together to solve this problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td>You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?</td>
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<td>Here are some options, what do you think?</td>
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Adapted from the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum and Tamarack Institute of Community Engagement Techniques
## Engagement spectrum

**Increasing level of public impact**

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<td>Example Techniques to Consider:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fact sheets</td>
<td>• Public comment</td>
<td>• Workshops</td>
<td>• Citizen Advisory Committees</td>
<td>• Citizen juries</td>
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<td>• Web sites</td>
<td>• Focus groups</td>
<td>• Deliberate polling</td>
<td>• Ballots</td>
<td>• Delegated decisions</td>
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<td>• Open houses</td>
<td>• Surveys</td>
<td>• Community Meetings</td>
<td>• Consensus-building</td>
<td>• Participatory decision-making</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Presentations</td>
<td>• Public Meetings</td>
<td>• Visioning</td>
<td>• Articulating committee</td>
<td>• Working groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tours</td>
<td>• Door to Door</td>
<td>• Digital Story Telling</td>
<td>• Asset-based community</td>
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<td>• Infographics</td>
<td>• Interviews</td>
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<td>Development Processes</td>
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<td>• Media Coverage</td>
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Three considerations

1. Clarifying the problem to be solved or opportunity to be grasped.
1. Defining the decision-maker and clarifying this with participants.
1. Defining the objectives of the community engagement process.

Trust is a critical objective.
Engagement in your county

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1yURQ-PbXeyncOPkxEOoeMVwiR_xI2MEF1AJXA5hOpvM/edit#responses
1. **Reflect** on a time when you have seen community engagement occur in your county.
   
   A. What worked well?
   B. Who was involved?
   C. Where did it fall on the engagement spectrum?

*Take 3 minutes to reflect or make notes on your own.*
2. With a partner at your table, share the engagement experience in your county.
   
   A. Briefly describe the engagement.
   B. What worked well?
   C. Where did it fall on the engagement spectrum?

   Take 2 minutes each to share.
Let’s learn—share

3. Quickly appoint a notetaker/reporter. Around the table, **share** the engagement experience in your county.
   
   A. Briefly describe the engagement.
   B. What worked well?
   C. Where did it fall on the engagement spectrum?

   *Take 12 minutes to share—be ready to share an example with the room.*
Let’s learn—report

4. Report—Let’s hear from counties of varying sizes and different categories on the engagement spectrum.

A. Briefly describe the community engagement.
B. What worked well?
C. Where did it fall on the engagement spectrum?
4 Ds of Appreciative Inquiry

1. Discover
2. Dream
3. Design
4. Deliver
Call to action

What is an outstanding decision in your county where community engagement techniques could be applied?

What step will you take to draw community engagement into that decision?

Write it on your notecard.
Takeaways

- For community engagement to occur, there must be a decision yet to be made.
- Community engagement allows better decisions to be made.
- Community engagement takes on increasing levels of community impact.
We are here to help!

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Thank you!