



King County

Community Engagement Guide

May 2011

Overview

King County has developed this Community Engagement Guide for employees and programs to promote effective engagement and customer service with all county communities.

The Strategic Plan, “Working Together for One King County,” charts a path for how King County will conduct its business for 2010-2014. One of the plan’s goals is to “promote robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities.”

The Strategic Plan’s strategies to achieve these goals include:

- Develop communication channels that will allow all residents ongoing opportunities to be heard
- Ensure that communication, outreach, and engagement efforts reach all residents, particularly communities that have been historically under-represented
- Promote meaningful community participation in decisions that affect their community
- Develop guidelines and standards for public engagement for use by all county agencies
- Use public outreach to better communicate who we are and what we do

In late 2010, King County adopted an Equity and Social Justice Ordinance, establishing definitions and directing implementation steps related to the “fair and just principle” of the strategic plan. The ordinance defines the following equity and social justice foundational practices for the county:

- Raise visibility of equity and social justice
- Increase focus on upstream determinants of equity
- Consider equity and social justice impacts in all decision-making
- Promote fairness and opportunity in County government practices
- Collaborate across agencies
- Build community trust and capacity

This guide builds on the county’s Strategic Plan as well as the Equity and Social Justice Ordinance.

Community engagement is a two-way exchange of information, ideas and resources. Engagement activities include a range of approaches from informing to sharing leadership to resident-led efforts, depending on the degree of community and county involvement, decision-making and control.

Community engagement should offer opportunities for communities to express their views and have a meaningful role in decision-making. It should also consider the diversity of our communities, including culture and ethnicity, and seek to create an inclusive and accessible process. Effective engagement removes barriers for communities that may have previously prevented residents from successfully working with county government.

The work is challenging and complex and you might make mistakes. The rewards of successful public engagement, however, are great, and lead to better results and work products.

This guide provides tools, examples and resources to help you in the community engagement process.



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Getting started:

This guide should be used during the initial planning stage and before work begins with the public.

The three steps to using this guide:

1. Review the **Community Engagement Continuum** and the examples.
2. Carefully complete the **Community Engagement Worksheet**
3. Share the ***Community Engagement Worksheet*** with your team members and include their input before you begin next steps.

Notes:

If you have questions or need assistance contact:

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Community Engagement Continuum

The continuum provides details, characteristics and strategies for five levels of community engagement. The continuum shows a range of actions from county-led information sharing that tends to be shorter-term to longer-term community-led activities. The continuum can be used for both simple and complex efforts. As a project develops, the level of community engagement may need to change to meet changing needs and objectives.

The level of engagement will depend on various factors, including program goals, time constraints, level of program and community readiness, and capacity and resources. There is no one right level of engagement, but considering the range of engagement and its implications on your work is a key step in promoting community participation and building community trust. Regardless of the level of engagement, the role of both King County and community partners as part of the engagement process should always be clearly defined.

Levels of Engagement				
<p style="text-align: center;">County Informs</p> <p>King County initiates an effort, coordinates with departments and uses a variety of channels to inform community to take action</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">County Consults</p> <p>King County gathers information from the community to inform county-led interventions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">County engages in dialogue</p> <p>King County engages community members to shape county priorities and plans</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">County and community work together</p> <p>Community and King County share in decision-making to co-create solutions together</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Community directs action</p> <p>Community initiates and directs strategy and action with participation and technical assistance from King County</p>
Characteristics of Engagement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily one-way channel of communication • One interaction • Term-limited to event • Addresses immediate need of county and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily one-way channel of communication • One to multiple interactions • Short to medium-term • Shapes and informs county programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way channel of communication • Multiple interactions • Medium to long-term • Advancement of solutions to complex problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way channel of communication • Multiple interactions • Medium to long-term • Advancement of solutions to complex problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way channel of communication • Multiple interactions • Medium to long-term • Advancement of solutions to complex problems
Strategies				
<p>Media releases, brochures, pamphlets, outreach to vulnerable populations, ethnic media contacts, translated information, staff outreach to residents, new and social media</p>	<p>Focus groups, interviews, community surveys</p>	<p>Forums, advisory boards, stakeholder involvement, coalitions, policy development and advocacy, including legislative briefings and testimony, workshops, community-wide events</p>	<p>Co-led community meetings, advisory boards, coalitions, and partnerships, policy development and advocacy, including legislative briefings and testimony</p>	<p>Community-led planning efforts, community-hosted forums, collaborative partnerships, coalitions, policy development and advocacy including legislative briefings and testimony</p>



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Continuum of Engagement Examples:

County informs: King County initiates an effort, provides information through a variety of channels, and directs community to take action

- A. Flooding emergency preparedness. In preparing for an emergency flood scenario, the departments of Natural Resources and Parks, Development and Environmental Services, and Public Health worked together to communicate across various departments to ensure culturally-appropriate strategies were utilized and all communities received instruction in how to prepare for potential flooding. Websites, local ethnic media, educational materials in the most common languages, professional organizations, outreach to ethnic community centers, door-to-door contacts and Unincorporated Area Councils were used to disseminate directions to residents on how they can be prepared during an emergency. King County television featured an emergency preparedness Public Service Announcement. [More information](#)
- B. Cancer screening outreach. As part of an education campaign to reduce cervical cancer rates among local Vietnamese and Latina women, populations that suffer from higher rates of cervical cancer and lower rates of screening for the illness, Public Health produced materials and media releases in different languages. [More information](#)

County consults: King County gathers information from the community to inform county-led interventions:

- A. Link Light Rail survey and outreach. Following a Town Hall meeting hosted by King County, Department of Transportation (DOT) conducted a survey targeted to gather information from affected neighborhoods impacted by Link Light Rail services changes. DOT's *In Motion Program* consulted and worked directly with community-based agencies serving limited English proficient and English as a second language immigrant and refugee communities to ensure they were prepared on the use of the new regional ORCA fare cards. Presentations were made to community organizations that provide services to the most vulnerable populations to ensure they received information to help them access safe and efficient modes of transportation. [More information](#)
- B. Solid Waste Management. In cooperation with cities that were represented by interlocal agreements King County's Department of Natural Resources and Solid Waste Division, drafted a comprehensive Solid Waste Management plan to ensure dumping sites were not targeted to low income communities with higher concentrations of ESL populations. GIS mapping helped to identify, inform and promote actions to prevent those communities from becoming targeted for dumping site facilities. <http://www.kingcounty.gov/environment/dnwp.aspx>

County engages in dialogue: King County engages community members to shape priorities and plans:

- A. Equity & Social Justice. King County Equity & Social Justice sponsored Town hall events at various locations throughout the county utilizing the PBS *series Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?* Trained facilitators conducted dialogues with over 100 community groups representing education, criminal justice, human services, public health, youth and faith-based groups. The main goal of the dialogues was to raise awareness about the root causes of inequities, promote a common understanding of equity and social justice principles, and exchange ideas with community groups about possible actions and activities to create stronger and healthier communities. [More information](#)
- B. Youth outreach. Youth and community members were engaged to help develop a process for identifying causes preventing them from appearing at court hearings and being issued warrants. King County Juvenile



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Justice and King County Superior Court worked together with the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget to reduce the number of warrants and detention time for failure to appear at court hearings particularly for youth of color. Extensive feedback from all groups represented contributed to designing a pilot program that provides outreach workers to youth with prior warrant histories. [More information](#)

County and community work together: Community and King County share in decision-making to co-create solutions:

A. **Skyway Solutions.** King County worked together with a diversity of residents in Skyway to craft an action agenda that reflects local goals and promotes community-driven activities for revitalization. The process was co-designed by community members and facilitated by a non-profit partner to engage meaningful community leadership and participation in decision making - a guiding principle of equitable development. Because the community would be responsible for leading implementation, the process was intentionally designed to build the capacity of the community to address problems, find solutions, and lead change. Today, Skyway Solutions is sustained by the collective leadership of an engaged and mobilized community; King County provides technical assistance upon request. [More information](#)

B. **Committee to End Homelessness.** The Department of Community and Human Services and community organizations and representatives worked together in the Committee to End Homelessness in King County to identify barriers and develop strategies to link persons living below the poverty line with affordable, quality and healthy housing options. The main focus of the project is to provide culturally competent services for all clients by removing barriers that prevent them from getting and maintaining housing. [More information](#)

Community directs action: Community initiates and directs strategy and action with participation, and technical assistance from King County

A. **Equal Start Community Coalition.** Public Health partnered with community members to form the Equal Start Community Coalition to address social determinants that lead to inequities in birth outcomes for African American, Native American and Latino families. The community-led coalition brings together affected groups, community members, health and human service providers, and policy makers to exchange ideas and identify strategic actions with technical assistance and funding support from Public Health. [More information.](#)

King County References and Resources:

2010-2014-King County Strategic Plan, www.kingcounty.gov/strategicplan/
King County Equity & Social Justice, www.kingcounty.gov/equity
King County Civil Rights Commission, www.kingcounty.gov/exec/CRC
Plain Language Style Guide, www.kingcounty.gov/exec/styleguide/plainwriting
Translation Executive Order, www.kingcounty.gov/operations/policies/executive/itaeo/inf142aao.aspx
Communities Count - Indicators Across King County, www.communitiescount.org/

Resources:

City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative, <http://www.seattle.gov/rsji>
Community Toolbox, ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/chapter_1006.aspx
Bayside Community Engagement Framework, www.bayside.vic.gov.au
An Overview of Communities Practice-National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center
www.oes.ca.gov/operational/oes/vulnerable_populations
PBS Series, Unnatural Causes, Is Inequality Making Us Sick? www.unnaturalcauses.org