

PROJECT ENGAGE
**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
POLICY**
2024



INTRODUCTION

The City of Cincinnati is committed to fostering collaboration, trust, and transparency by actively engaging with the public. This document provides guidelines for the City’s approach to community engagement and details our goals, action steps, and methods for measuring success.

PURPOSE

This Administrative Regulation (AR) aims to embrace the directive of the Cincinnati City Council. It establishes a framework for clear and inclusive communication with the community and replaces Administrative Regulation 69 (AR69) using the guidance from Ordinance 0358-2021. Through this regulation, we are implementing a community engagement policy with supplemental resources and training opportunities for City staff, elected officials, and community members. The City seeks to ensure that all necessary parties within the City Administration, elected officials and staff, and outside stakeholders are proactively made aware of pending opportunities for engagement and understand the various collaborative roles played by impacted parties during the planning and implementation stages of engagement events. Each potential engagement opportunity will require a detailed review of the context and intended impacts of proposed engagement activities, after which the necessary resources can be identified and allocated.

VISION

To be a thriving Cincinnati where all voices are empowered and engaged in shaping our shared future through transparency, collaboration, and access.

MISSION

To create fair and inclusive engagement practices that foster positive relationships and encourage meaningful connections between City staff and the public.

EQUITY STATEMENT

We recognize that equitable community engagement is fundamental to building trust, fostering collaboration, and achieving meaningful outcomes that benefit all community members. We are committed to providing an environment that is welcoming of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

RECOGNIZING HISTORY

We acknowledge that historical context is crucial to the engagement process. City leaders and staff will have opportunities to deepen their understanding of past policies and practices that have led to inequities and mistrust between community members and local government.

VALUES



Encouraging Participation

We will ensure that community members representing various backgrounds, perspectives, and demographics can participate in the decision-making process. We strongly believe individuals impacted by a decision hold a fundamental right to actively engage in problem-solving and decision-making.



Equity and Inclusion

We recognize the critical importance of acknowledging potential barriers to access and inclusion within our engagement strategies. We pledge to actively identify these barriers, dedicate time and resources to creating accessible and inclusive opportunities, and ensure our decision-making processes result in equitable outcomes.



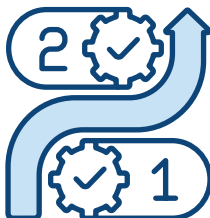
Transparency

We believe a strong, inclusive community relies on open and transparent communication. We are dedicated to providing clear, accessible, and timely information about City-wide initiatives, decisions, and processes. This commitment includes maintaining ongoing dialogue, documenting outcomes, and ensuring information is available to everyone in our community, regardless of background or ability.



Measurable Impact and Purposeful Action

We commit to creating engagement strategies that are intentional and quantifiable in terms of their outcomes and impact.



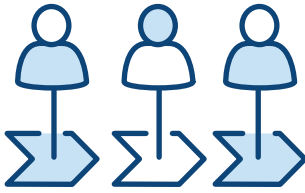
Evaluation and Improvement

We are dedicated to continuous learning and improvement. Through ongoing evaluation of our community engagement initiatives, we are committed to identifying areas for growth and ensuring our efforts are effective and responsive to the needs of the community.

GOALS



Establish engagement practices that increase community participation in City initiatives and events.



Incorporate community engagement as a stage in all decision-making.



Employ various methods to increase transparency and access to local government.



Foster a culture that encourages collaboration amongst City staff and community groups.



Create and uphold a culture of community engagement that promotes positive relationships between City staff and the public.

ACTIONS



Staff and Stakeholder Training

We will provide training opportunities to educate City staff, elected officials, and community members on engagement best practices.



Educational Resources

We will provide opportunities for community members to learn and understand the City's functions and activities through the engagement resource guide website, city-led initiatives, and training opportunities.



Department Champions

We will establish a team of community engagement champions throughout City departments to help share engagement standards with their respective departments.



Engaging on New Topics

We will provide opportunities for community members to identify topics of interest and initiate dialogue with City staff.



Expanding Our Reach

We will exercise creative and innovative approaches to community engagement to expand our reach to individuals traditionally excluded using technology, community connections, and engagement software.



Developing and Maintaining Relationships

We will adopt a community-first culture within the City by providing and promoting opportunities for city staff and community members to engage with one another.



Using Creative Engagement Methods

We will diversify our engagement techniques by using the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum and other engagement best practices.



Tracking

We will establish and maintain a tracking system to monitor and improve engagement practices using data collected directly from community members and staff.



Regular Updates

We will share updates regarding community engagement efforts and how public input contributed to decision-making through an annual community engagement report.



Sharing Success

We will share successful City engagement efforts via the community engagement resource guide website and other communication tools.



Ensuring Impact

We will review engagement information and feedback to adjust and improve our engagement methods using information collected from the engagement tracking form and annual report.

MEASUREMENTS

The following measurements will be used to monitor and support the community engagement goals and action steps:



CITY SURVEY

We will review public perceptions of engagement using the existing City-wide Community Perceptions survey.



TRAINING RESULTS

We will track the number of training opportunities provided and who participated. We will measure the success of employee training by conducting a pre- and post-survey.



DEMOGRAPHIC MEASUREMENTS

We will collect and analyze demographic data of those who participate in engagement, including race, ethnicity, preferred gender, household status, preferred language, neighborhood, and age range.



ENGAGEMENT DATA COLLECTION

We will capture the engagement tools used by City departments, community insights on engagement initiatives, and the total number of City engagements per year.



ANNUAL REPORT

We will use information collected through engagement tracking to create an annual report aimed at sharing the success and impact of engagement practices.

TRACKING

Engagement strategies will be tracked using a variety of data analysis tools. The City will handle all community engagement data responsibly and in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

Each department will self-report engagement efforts via the selected platform throughout the fiscal year in accordance with all other performance analytics.

Additional data surrounding engagements is welcomed. We do not expect City staff to document daily interactions with the public. Other exclusions may apply.

All of the following will be tracked:



Engagements required by law



Engagements regarding policy creation and/or amendments



Engagements seeking public input on a proposed project



Engagements that involve surveying or polling community members



Engagements that support a specific community or neighborhood



Engagement that involves or collaborates with community members

AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

The City will proactively identify opportunities for engagement and determine the necessary parties within the City administration, elected officials and staff, and external stakeholders to move forward with planning and implementation as mandated by the particular context. This policy is designed to enhance the quality of community engagement initiatives across a broad spectrum of City-related activities that include but are not limited to:



Policymaking and Governance

- Developing and implementing local policies, ordinances, and regulations.
- Overseeing the operation of local government departments and agencies.
- Making decisions on local issues, such as taxation, public services, and public safety.
- Ensuring compliance with state and federal laws.



Service Delivery and Improvements

- Providing essential municipal services, such as water, sanitation, and public transportation.
- Maintaining and improving infrastructure, including roads, bridges, public buildings, sewer, and stormwater.
- Managing public parks, recreational facilities, and cultural programs.



Budget and Resource Allocation

- Developing and managing the City's budget.
- Allocating resources to various City departments and programs.
- Ensuring fiscal responsibility and accountability.
- Monitoring revenues and expenditures to maintain financial stability.



City Planning and Development

- Managing urban development and growth.
- Approving building permits and conducting inspections.
- Collaborating with community councils to develop long-term neighborhood plans.
- Managing the sale of City real estate.
- Overseeing tax incentives.



Public Safety and Community Well-Being

- Managing local law enforcement and emergency services.
- Addressing public safety concerns, including crime prevention and response.
- Promoting community health and well-being through programs and services.
- Collaborating with social service agencies to support vulnerable populations.









Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives

- Developing and implementing policies and programs to protect the environment.
- Promoting sustainable practices, such as renewable energy and waste reduction.
- Addressing issues like air and water quality, conservation, and green infrastructure.
- Encouraging community awareness and involvement in environmental matters.

FRAMEWORK

We will implement an adapted version of the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2) spectrum for community engagement. IAP2’s Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to help select the level of participation that defines the public’s role in any public participation process.

	Level of community power 				
	INFORM 	CONSULT 	INVOLVE 	COLLABORATE 	OWN 
Public Participation Goal	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Committee Presentations • Development Notices • Social Media Campaigns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Perceptions Survey • Public Comment • Focus Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile Engagement Unit • Policy Explorations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood Plans • Community-driven Advisory Groups (MAG) • Place-based Problem Solving (PIVOT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe & Clean Fund • Boots on the Ground Fund

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

The City of Cincinnati values the contributions of all City employees and is committed to providing educational opportunities to expand professional reach and contributions to community-centered practices. As such, the City of Cincinnati will offer continuous support to staff in the form of a community engagement guide, employee training, and access to personnel who are dedicated to advancing and supporting community engagement efforts.

Engagement training opportunities will:

- Be offered regularly and include a variety of topics.
- Be incorporated into new employee orientation.
- Be tracked by Community Engagement Specialists.
- Include an annual engagement refresher for City staff.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

This community engagement policy will be implemented through a multi-step approach.

The City will:

- Establish a team of “community engagement champions” responsible for disseminating the policy standards and best practices throughout their respective departments.
- Launch a series of training opportunities for staff and elected officials that focus on effective engagement methods, fostering inclusivity, and utilizing data to measure success. Additional training opportunities will be available for community members.
- Develop a user-friendly platform for tracking engagement efforts. This platform will allow departments to record details of their engagement activities, including the tools used, participant demographics, and key insights gathered.
- Establish a regular review process led by a team of Community Engagement Specialists to assess the effectiveness of the policy and identify areas for improvement. This ongoing evaluation will ensure the policy can adapt to meet the evolving needs of the Cincinnati community.

To measure the success of the community engagement policy, the City will track a variety of engagement metrics. Additionally, success will be measured by the demonstrable impact of community input on City decisions. By tracking these factors, the City can ensure that the engagement process is not only inclusive but also leads to tangible results that benefit the community.

The City of Cincinnati is committed to driving equitable, tangible results. City leaders and staff are accountable for ensuring meaningful community engagement strategies are implemented. The City of Cincinnati will review the Community Engagement Policy every two years to assess the need for appropriate amendments.

SHARED DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were created through a collaborative process and include words that participating community members felt are critical to this policy and the future of community engagement in the City of Cincinnati.



Accessibility

Ensuring that resources, events, and community services are readily available and easily attainable to all individuals, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. This includes removing obstacles, being transparent, and prioritizing user-friendly approaches to meet the needs of all individuals.



Capacity

The collective ability of a community to identify and address challenges, leverage resources, and drive progress. It encompasses factors such as leadership, skills, resources, and social capital.



Community Engagement

The proactive and intentional process of engaging community members in the decision-making process. This includes providing inclusive communication, meaningful participation, and an active presence within the community.



Community Member

An individual who lives, works, or engages in the Cincinnati community.



Diversity

The recognition, celebration, and inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, perspectives, and demographics within a community.



Equity

The principle of fairness and inclusivity in decision-making processes and resource allocation within a community regardless of a person's background, ability or circumstances.



Inclusion

Ensuring that all individuals are welcomed, valued, and have shared power to fully participate in local government.



Intentionality

A purposeful approach to decision-making and actions centered on the needs and perspectives of those most affected. It involves planning with clear goals, strategic thinking, and thoughtful consideration for all individuals' well-being.



Transparency

Openly and honestly sharing information, decisions, and processes. It includes clear communication and a commitment to including public participation in the decision-making process.



Trust

The confidence and belief that individuals, organizations, and communities will act in the collective interest, uphold commitments, and maintain open and honest communication.