

Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Structure



Purpose: To ensure that communities are active participants and decision makers in the development and implementation of Track I CCG grants, applicants must submit a Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan (Attachment E). This plan ensures that communities are active participants and decision makers in the development and implementation of the proposed projects. The attachment should demonstrate how you will inform, respond to, and engage community members throughout project development and performance.

Goals of Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan

Active and ongoing community engagement will be critical to ensure that the projects are community driven. EPA is looking for applicants who can show pre-existing community outreach and engagement to ensure the projects are meeting community needs. Your application will need to show:

- **Past Community Outreach and Engagement Conducted**

How your past engagement with the Project Area community affected the Strategy and associated project selection and approach in your application. This includes the outreach and engagement methods you used for the Project Area and specific neighborhoods or groups within the Project Area.

- **Community Engagement Plan Implementation**

The specific community engagement methods (e.g. community meetings, surveys, social media advertisements) you will use and how they will lessen barriers and involve governmental stakeholders that are necessary to support the overall project performance.

- **Collaborative Governance Structure**

The specific roles and responsibilities each organization or community representative will have throughout project development, management, and implementation. This should include how community members or chosen representatives will be meaningfully included, the process for internal coordination and decision-making, and the process for replacing a collaborating entity.

Bottom Line

Conduct robust community engagement throughout the process – from design to implementation. Provide detailed roles and responsibilities for the Lead Applicant, Collaborating Entities, and community residents and/or community-selected representatives.

Double Check

- Has community feedback influenced:
- ✓ the Community Vision Description
 - ✓ the Climate Action Strategies
 - ✓ the Pollution Reduction Strategies



Guiding Questions and Considerations

Past Community Outreach and Engagement Conducted

1. What key neighborhoods and communities have you reached out to?
2. How have you used existing relationships with community partners and organizations to capture diverse perspectives?
3. What was the method and frequency of the outreach and engagement?
4. What did you learn through the outreach process? Consider what best practices and available resources you identified, as well as knowledge gaps, community-specific concerns, hopes and dreams, and shared goals.
5. How did the community input inform the selection of Strategies and Projects? What changes did you make in response to the information you collected during outreach?



Community Engagement Plan Implementation

1. How will you continue to meaningfully engage members of the community?

Describe:

- a. *Outreach methods that provide opportunities for broad and diverse community member involvement:*
 - b. *Mechanisms for how you will be accountable to the needs and preferences of residents in the Project Area:*
 - c. *How you will continuously inform communities throughout the entire application and project life:*
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2. How will you overcome or lessen barriers to participation?

Barriers may include:

 - a. *Lack of awareness*
 - b. *Lack of access (time/location)*
 - c. *Cultural or social norms*
 - d. *Lack of motivation*



3. What are the appropriate government agencies you need to involve in carrying out your projects? These include federal, state, local, and Tribal governments.
 - a. *Which government agencies will you reach out to and how?*

 - b. *How will you involve these government agencies in the projects?*

Collaborative Governance Structure

Roles and Responsibilities

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of the Lead Applicant, Statutory Partner, and each Collaborating Entity?

2. Who are the community resident(s) or community-selected representative(s) who are officially part of the collaborative governance structure?

Describe:

 - a. *How will they be/were they selected?*
 - b. *What was their involvement in selecting the Strategies?*
 - c. *What roles will they play in overseeing implementation?*
 - d. *What additional responsibilities, if any, do they have on the project?*



3. How have you reached consensus among all your partners on these roles and responsibilities? How have you documented and communicated these roles and responsibilities among the partners and to the community?

Process for Internal Coordination and Decision-Making

1. What coordination strategies are you creating to communicate with your Collaborating Entities and Statutory Partner?

Describe:

- c. The method and frequency of communication.*
 - d. Mechanisms to support transparent communication.*
2. What type of decision-making process will you use, and who will play a role in making decisions?
3. How do the Statutory Partner and the Collaborating Entities have real decision-making authority to implement and achieve project goals?



Process for Collaborating Entity Replacement

1. If you need to replace Collaborating Entities, what process will you use? EPA will need to formally approval of the qualifications, expertise, and experience of the replacement Collaborating Entity.

Consider:

- a. *Who needs to be involved in the decision to replace a Collaborating Entity?*
 - b. *How will you get input from the other members of the partnership and the community members/representatives?*
 - c. *How will you make sure that the replacement is qualified?*

2. How will you make sure that the replacement entity has similar skills, qualifications, expertise, community support, and experience?

Consider:

- a. *Keeping records and/or resumes that prove the skills, qualifications, expertise, community support, and experience of the existing Collaborating Entity.*
- b. *Maintaining ongoing communication and participation with the community and other potential Collaborating Entities so that they can help identify an alternative Collaborating Entity, if needed.*
- c. *Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the Collaborating Entity and demonstrating how an alternative would meet those needs.*

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Tips to Consider

This section provides tips for possible concerns and solutions related to the Community Engagement and Collaborative Governance Plan. See NOFO Section I.G for more information.

Concerns	Solutions to Consider
<i>Meaningful community involvement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider multiple types of community engagement and outreach opportunities (such as online surveys, workshops, advisory committees). ✓ Create spaces for brainstorming and sharing experiences together. ✓ Remember that the point of the project is to improve the lives of the community, so their voice must be at the center of all decisions.
<i>Clear and accountable outreach</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be clear about how input will be and has been a part of your project decisions. ✓ Explain any limits or constraints. ✓ Have clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and partners. ✓ Use agendas in meetings to maintain clear goals and provide minutes. ✓ Have a process for collecting, storing, and sharing meeting minutes and decisions. ✓ Provide timelines with milestones and make data, measurements, and reports available to the public.
<i>Continuous outreach and engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider which types of messages are most likely to reach your community (such as mail, in-person, social media). ✓ Community advisory board ✓ Email lists and physical mailings ✓ Ongoing public events or presentation ✓ Other communication tools
<i>Handling of awareness barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Multiple methods of announcing outreach and engagement opportunities. ✓ Social media; press releases; flyers; direct outreach by partners; short, low-commitment surveys to generate interest.
<i>Handling of logistical barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consider public transportation, parking, and access for persons with disabilities. ✓ Provide childcare and meals, as appropriate and available. ✓ Hold meetings in an adequate and trusted facility. ✓ Offer multiple time options to make diverse participation possible. ✓ Piggyback on other planned events that people are already attending. ✓ Use websites only as a backup to any engagement and outreach.

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Concerns	Solutions to Consider
<i>Handling of cultural or social barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make sure that community partners are equal partners and able to connect with different cultural and social groups. ✓ Provide translation services if appropriate, including American Sign Language. ✓ Use materials that are easy for the community to read and understand. ✓ Provide enough background information during outreach activities so that individuals from the community can meaningfully engage. ✓ Promote an atmosphere of equal participation by avoiding the use of a head table or panel at in-person events.
<i>Handling of personal or motivational barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Present the Lead Applicant, Statutory Partner, and Collaborating Entities as being balanced, neutral, and welcoming to diverse audiences. ✓ Be transparent about the intent of the engagement and outreach efforts. ✓ Communicate how the public can impact the project design. ✓ Make it clear what the outcomes and results of the projects will be and how they can benefit the community.
<i>Government involvement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tribal Nations may have specific procedures on who is able to represent them. ✓ Multiple agencies may work in the same communities but not coordinate. ✓ Consider other new or ongoing efforts, plans, and policies (such as town conceptual plans, state incentive programs, or new federal sites for pollution remediation).
<i>Successful partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Modeling collaboration, grace and goodwill go a long way to making the decision making easier and the project work better by fostering goodwill. ✓ Preparing the application is an opportunity to see if you'll work well with potential partners. It is easier to replace a partner in the application phase than it will be to replace them after EPA has approved the Collaborating Entities.
<i>Different methods of decision-making</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Majority rule (more than 50 percent of members of a group support a decision). ✓ Plurality (a decision is made based on what has the most support even if it is not more than 50 percent of the group). ✓ Consensus (all members of a group agree on the decision). ✓ Consider creating a diagram to illustrate decision-making processes, especially if some entities will have more authority than others.



Resources

1. EPA Guidance on Participant Support Costs
EPA guidance on participant support costs for community outreach and engagement efforts.
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2020-11/documents/epa-guidance-on-participant-support-costs.pdf>
2. Guidance on Selected Items of Cost for Recipients
EPA guidance on the allowability of certain costs for community outreach and engagement efforts, including advertising, advisory councils, entertainment, fundraising, meals and light refreshments, and proposal costs.
https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/documents/recipient_guidance_selected_items_of_cost_final.pdf
3. Community Involvement Plans
A Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is a site-specific strategy to enable meaningful community involvement throughout the Superfund cleanup process.
<https://semspub.epa.gov/work/11/174739.pdf>
4. Community Engagement Strategy
Issues to consider when planning and designing community engagement approaches for Tribal Integrated Waste Management Programs.
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-03/documents/tribalswcommunityengagementstrategy508.pdf>
5. Capacity Building Through Effective Meaningful Engagement: A Tool for Local and State Governments
A tool for local and state governments to have a roadmap for meaningful engagement and innovative examples of engagement.
https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-09/epa-capacity-building-through-effective-meaningful-engagement-booklet_0.pdf
6. Stakeholder Involvement & Public Participation at the U.S. EPA
Provides lessons learned, barriers, and innovative approaches to community engagement and outreach.
<https://nepis.epa.gov/Exe/ZyPDF.cgi/2000CQR5.PDF?Dockey=2000CQR5.PDF>
7. The Model Plan for Public Participation
A report and checklist on public participation from EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Council.
<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-02/documents/model-public-part-plan.pdf>