2022

Provisional Community Engagement Guide

WASHINGTON STATE DEPT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Acknowledgement of Past Practices

The Environmental Justice Task Force (Task Force) notes in its report that governing structures of the United States were designed to elevate the rights and access to its resources of some people at the expense of the rights and access of others. The process of settler colonialism that led to the permanent settlements of one society by displacing Indigenous populations who "already derived economic vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination from the relationships they established with the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems" is likely one of the largest legacies of environmental injustice in the Pacific Northwest. These governing structures, rooted in settler colonialism and white supremacy, led to the systemic inequity to which the environmental justice (EJ) movement responds. In the past, and in many places today, these governing structures are reaffirmed, often in response to efforts to move toward more equitable laws and practices and are widely maintained today.

Equitable community engagement can act to disrupt these inequitable governing structures and systems by democratizing decision-making processes. The foundation of meaningful community engagement must be an evaluation of who is negatively impacted and who is benefitted by any agency decisions meant to benefit the public as a whole. Environmental injustices across the state have, after all, been created by decision-makers who have perpetually dismissed and allowed for the placement of pollution within certain communities, such as those who live along and fish contaminated waters, or the concentration of landfills in low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, or the contamination of water and soil in agricultural communities.

The guidance that follows is grounded in the position that these systems cannot change without the direct involvement of the communities who have borne the weight of systemic disparities, and that such involvement has been rarely supported by Washington state's government. We recognize the critical value of repairing relationships and building trust with these communities.

Repairing relationships and building trust between government and those members of the public harmed by environmental injustice is central to this guidance. Additionally, we provide a section focused specifically on repairing relations and building trust between Washington state government and Tribal Nation governments. A focus on trust-building in this context places skills like cultural humility and emotionally intelligent communication in the forefront, and we see more ties to community organizing and cultivating ongoing relationships than to conventional communications-oriented information sharing.

Forward

July 1st, 2022

In 2021, the legislature adopted the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act (RCW 70A.02). This historic law provides a multiyear roadmap for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other state agencies to integrate environmental justice (EJ) into strategic plans and decision-making processes. Starting in the Fall of 2021, DNR and six other state agencies (Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Ecology, Health, Transportation, and the Puget Sound Partnership) began meeting with Environmental Justice Council staff to collaborate on the development, authorship, and adoption of this interagency Community Engagement Guide for the first HEAL Act milestone on July 1, 2022.

This document reflects close to 10 months of partnership between the HEAL Act agencies and it remains a work in progress.

The HEAL Act states that in developing and updating community engagement plans, covered agencies "must consider any guidance developed by the [EJ] council." To facilitate this, the legislation directed the Department of Health to convene the Council's first meeting by January 1, 2022. Due to delays in the appointment process, the EJ Council was not fully appointed and seated until March 2022 and did not convene its first meeting until April 4th. As a result, it has not reviewed the current versions of the interagency DRAFT community engagement guide nor any other agency-specific community engagement plans. DNR and other agencies have reaffirmed their commitment to seek guidance and revise plans based on the recommendations of the EJ Council.

DNR is committed to a strong partnership with the EJ Council as we integrate environmental justice into agency activities. We recognize the importance of the Council as community representatives that function in concert with the community relationships we have developed as an agency. The EJ Council recommendations are a critical tool in creating a plan that DNR will implement. While we await that process of EJ Council review we are also mindful of our duty to the legislature and people of Washington to adopt a community engagement plan by July 1, 2022.

In balancing these interests and obligations, our agency is adopting a provisional community engagement plan. The future implementation of this provisional plan is dependent on coordination with the EJ Council and will incorporate guidance from the Council and communities across Washington state on specific activities and strategies. It will include a robust Tribal Consultation process that is currently being finalized within the agency. Following adoption of the provisional community engagement plan, DNR will collaborate with other HEAL Act agencies and the Council to hold community listening sessions. These sessions and ongoing discussions with the EJ Council will inform further updates and the necessary and expected changes to our provisional community engagement plans.

DNR will continue to be an active partner with the EJ Council as we grow our relationship with EJ Councilmembers, we will be engaged in deep community listening, and consult with our tribal partners as this community engagement plan is refined annually. Authentic community engagement is our forever work and enhances our ability to equitably serve all Washingtonians.

A central value in this work is transparency. DNR will share our proposed plans, timelines, and progress on HEAL Act activities. Along with these documents, additional information and resources on DNR and the HEAL Act will be updated at www.dnr.wa.gov/environmentaljustice

Table of Contents

History and Context of HEAL and Environmental Justice

Introduction to Environmental Justice

Due to a legacy of systemic racism, and inequities in wealth distribution and political power, BIPOC communities and other vulnerable populations (e.g., low-income, elderly peoples, limited English proficiency), experience a greater share of environmental harm and burdens while enjoying fewer environmental benefits. Past and present choices made by local, state, and federal governments contribute to the current state of environmental injustice.

Decisions such as where and how much to invest in expanding access to green spaces and tree canopy cover have often concentrated benefits in areas with few BIPOC and where residents have higher socio-economic statuses. Conversely, decisions such as the placement of waste facilities and freeways in economically disadvantaged areas with higher concentrations of BIPOC and low-income communities have exposed them to disproportionate levels of pollution and contributed to striking disparities in health outcomes and life expectancy. For example, data compiled by the Department of Health (Figure 1) shows that individuals living in census tracks with fewer environmental health disparities (EHD) can expect to live up to 6 years longer than individuals in census tracks with the highest levels of disparities.

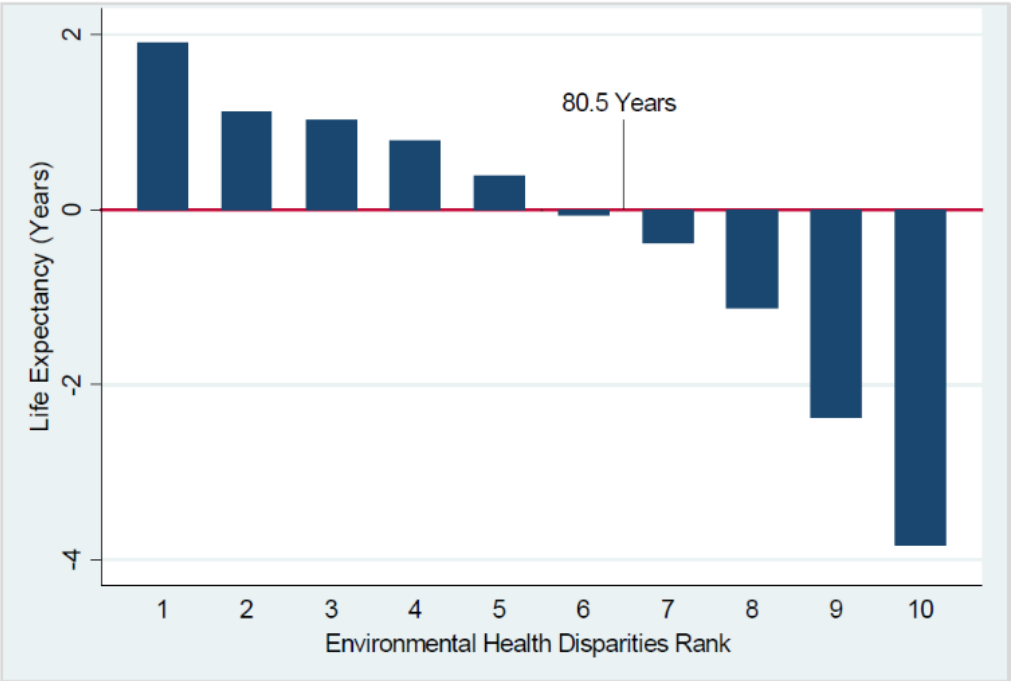


Figure 1: Differences in life expectancy by EHD rank vs. WA state average (EJ Task Force Report)

Environmental Justice (EJ) seeks, in part, to address and remedy inequities in the way environmental benefits, harms, and burdens are distributed among different population segments. These inequities have been exacerbated through public policies and will necessitate

a remedy that includes addressing challenges and questions as diverse as land use management, housing, transportation, and renewable and job-creating energy policies.

In addition to achieving equitable *distribution* of environmental benefits, harm, and burdens, EJ also requires a *recognition* of the disproportionate harm to, and limited involvement and representation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities. Finally, meaningful *participation* in decision-making processes related to one's health and environment is critical to mitigating environmental harms and gaining EJ.

EJ Task Force and the HEAL Act

In 2019, the legislature included a budget proviso in the 2019-2021 biennial operating budget that directed the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities to convene and staff an EJ Taskforce to make recommendations on how to embed EJ into state government community engagement plans. The Task Force released its Final Report in the Fall of 2020 and in 2021, the legislature passed the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act (E2SSB 5141). The legislation implemented many of the Task Force's recommendations and mandates that seven state agencies comply with specific EJ obligations and incorporate EJ principles into agency activities, such as strategic plans, community engagement plans, and budget mechanisms. These agencies are the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Ecology, Health, Natural Resources, and Transportation, as well as the Puget Sound Partnership. All other state agencies may opt-in to implementing the HEAL Act.

Imbalances in political power, representation, and influence have created many of the problems that the EJ movement seeks to remedy. The legislation recognizes that equitable outcomes must be predicated on equitable participation. Therefore, the first milestone in the HEAL Act's multiyear process begins with a mandate that state agencies transform the way that they engage the public. Codified in RCW 70A.02.050, the HEAL Act requires that agencies create and adopt community engagement plans. Specifically, each agency's plan must address the following:

- How will the agency engage with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations as it evaluates new and existing activities and programs?
- How will the agency facilitate equitable participation and support meaningful and direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities?
- How will the agency identify and prioritize overburdened communities for purposes of the HEAL Act?
- What best practices will the agency utilize for outreach and communication to overcome barriers to engagement with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations?
- How will the agency use special screening tools that integrate environmental, demographic, and health disparities data, such as the EHD map, to evaluate and

understand the nature and needs of the people who the agency expects to be impacted by significant agency action?

- What processes will the agency use to facilitate and support the inclusion of members of communities affected by agency decision making including, to the extent legal and practicable, but not limited to, child care and reimbursement for travel and other expenses?
- What methods of outreach and communication will the agency use with those who face barriers, language or otherwise, to participation?
- How will the agency conduct regular reviews of agency compliance with existing laws and policies that guide community engagement including compliance with: (a) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, or national origin and requiring meaningful access to people with limited English proficiency, and disability; (b) Executive Order 05-03, requiring plain talk when communicating with the public; and (c) Guidance related to Executive Order 13166, requiring meaningful access to agency programs and services for people with limited English proficiency?
- How will the agency consider guidance developed by the Environmental Justice Council when developing and updating its plan?
- How will the agency coordinate with the Office of Equity to identify policy and system barriers to meaningful engagement with communities as conducted by the office?
- How will the agency develop a consultation framework in coordination with tribal governments that includes best practices, protocols for communication, and collaboration with federally recognized tribes? How will the agency consult with federally recognized tribes on the creation and adoption or updating of a community engagement plan?

The Principles of EJ

Delegates for the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held on October 24-27, 1991, in Washington, DC, drafted and adopted these 17 principles of EJ. Since then, the Principles have served as a defining document for the growing grassroots movement for EJ.

1. **EJ** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
2. **EJ** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. **EJ** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planning for humans and other living things.
4. **EJ** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

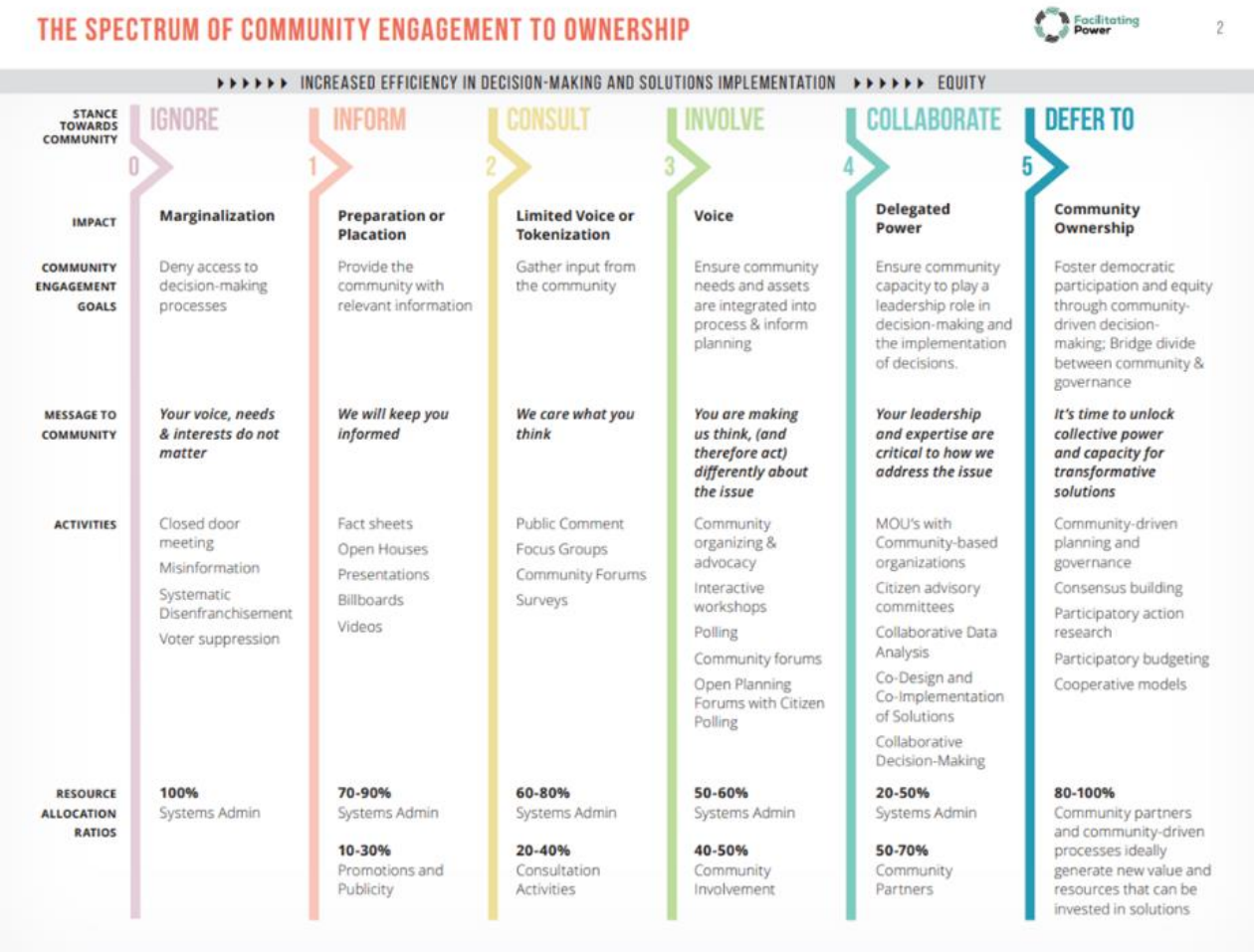
5. **EJ** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
6. **EJ** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. **EJ** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
8. **EJ** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
9. **EJ** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
10. **EJ** considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. **EJ** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
12. **EJ** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.
13. **EJ** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
14. **EJ** opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
15. **EJ** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
16. **EJ** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
17. **EJ** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

More information can be found online at: www.ejnet.org/ej/

The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership

As stated above, the first milestone in the HEAL Act's multiyear process begins with a mandate that state agencies transform the way they engage the public. This transformation calls for moving beyond the ways they typically engage communities – open houses, public comment, community forums, surveys, focus groups – to community driven decision-making.

There are several models for public participation. The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership, a tool developed by Rosa Gonzalez of Facilitating Power, is highlighted below. It drew from a number of public participation tools including Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and the Public Participation Spectrum created by the International Association for Public Participation (iap2). The model provides clear, specific, and concrete examples of how to engage communities in solutions development and decision making. The full model can be found here: CE2O_SPECTRUM_2020.pdf (d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net).



Definitions

Community: a group of people who are brought together by something in common. This can include things like cultural background, shared experience, and geographic location. One person can belong to many communities. (DOH Community Engagement Guide, p. 2)

Community engagement: the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. (CDC)

Environmental harm: means the individual or cumulative environmental health impacts and risks to communities caused by historic, current, or projected: (a) Exposure to pollution, conventional or toxic pollutants, environmental hazards, or other contamination in the air, water, and land; (b) Adverse environmental effects, including exposure to contamination, hazardous substances, or pollution that increase the risk of adverse environmental health outcomes or create vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate change; (c) Loss or impairment of ecosystem functions or traditional food resources or loss of access to gather cultural resources or harvest traditional foods; or (d) Health and economic impacts from climate change.

Environmental Justice (EJ): the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, rules, and policies. EJ includes addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts in all laws, rules, and policies with environmental impacts by prioritizing vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, the equitable distribution of resources and benefits, and eliminating harm. (HEAL Act)

Equitable distribution: a fair and just, but not necessarily equal, allocation intended to mitigate disparities in benefits and burdens that are based on current conditions, including existing legacy and cumulative impacts, that are informed by cumulative environmental health impact analysis.

Equity: The act of developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable (not equal) opportunity for all people. Equity is distinct from equality which refers to everyone having the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equity has a focus on eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of historically and currently oppressed groups.

Highly impacted communities: a community designated by the Department of Health as highly impacted by fossil fuel pollution and climate change in Washington, or a community located in census tracts that are fully or partially on "Indian country" as defined in 18 U.S.C. Sec. 1151.

Language access: is achieved when individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) can communicate effectively with program staff and participate in programs and activities. (HRSA)

Language justice: there is no single or static definition of language justice. It is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces so that everyone's voice can be heard both as an individual and as part of a diversity of communities and cultures. Valuing language justice means recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice. [from Language Justice Toolkit by Communities Creating Healthy Environments (CCHE)]

Meaningful and Inclusive Community Engagement: builds more sustainable agency programs and decisions, and it increases community understanding of agency decisions and transparency and trust in government actions.; a way of fostering trust, strengthening relationships, and honoring community knowledge that leads to more effective and equitable solutions. (EJ Task Force)

Overburdened communities: means a geographic area where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts, and includes, but is not limited to, highly impacted communities as defined in RCW 19.405.020. In the specific context of the process included in this section, "community" is defined by a geographic location (e.g., a census tract, a county, a region) that can be identified on a map. We can understand "overburdened communities" to be geographic areas where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts.

Vulnerable populations: population groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: (i) Adverse socioeconomic factors, such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and (ii) sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization.

"Vulnerable populations" includes, but is not limited to:

- Racial or ethnic minorities;
- Low-income populations; Populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and
- Populations of workers experiencing environmental harms. (HEAL Act)

How to Use this Document

There are three sections in this document:

Part 1: Preparing to Engage with Community
Part 2: Engaging with Community
Part 3: Gathering Community Input and Feedback

Community engagement is most likely to happen when new projects are being initiated and/or existing projects are being assessed. Each project should have its own community engagement plan as it may require reaching out to different communities. Engaging and partnering with communities as early as possible into a project is what agencies should always aim for.

Each section has worksheets, processes, checklists to help agency staff when doing community engagement. This guide is a work in progress and will change on a regular basis to incorporate what agencies learn when engaging with communities.

Process Guide: How to Effectively Engage Community

This section of the Guide provides resources, tools, and best practices for increasing meaningful and inclusive community engagement. Successful community engagement is a long-term process to build relationships and trust in communities. It requires thoughtfulness, intentionality, transparency, and accountability that takes into account barriers to participation that may arise due to race, color, ethnicity, religion, income or education level (EJ Task Force). All agencies can embed EJ into their policies, practices and processes by prioritizing and investing in meaningful community engagement (EJ Task Force). EJ will not be achieved only as a result of our intentions; it must be guided by informed decision-making and what actions are chosen to take next (EJ Task Force).

Part 1: Preparing to Engage with Community

This section shares resources, tools, and recommended processes to consider prior to engagement with communities. It is intended to help identify and carry out the agency's commitment to public participation in decision making particularly for those programs and projects that will affect communities. Additionally, it provides tools and strategies to optimize communication with communities across Washington (DOT).

The first step is to determine how community engagement will inform the process, program, rule, grant, etc. that is being worked on. Ask the questions: "Who will be impacted by what I am working on? Who is not currently included in the process? What perspectives are missing?" Depending on responses, plan for how and when community engagement will be included in the timeline and the process for the project.

When community engagement is required for the project, it is important to determine the purpose, goals, and objectives of the engagement.

- What is the project going to do?
- What is the purpose for engaging community?
- What is the timeline? Is this enough time to hear from multiple segments of the community and meaningfully involve them at multiple points of the decision-making process?
- How will community members be compensated for their time and for sharing their expertise?
- Throughout the project lifecycle, where will communities be engaged? What engagement methods will be used and where do those methods fall along the spectrum of community engagement? Are these methods moving toward~~s~~ "Defer to"?
- How will community members know how their input will be used?
- How will community members know about the progress and outcomes of the project?

STEP 1: Review the Key Principles of Community Engagement

These Key Principles were adapted from the [Department of Health Community Engagement Guide]

Community engagement can be complex. It is important to recognize and respect the diversity and the unique assets of different communities. It takes a long time to build strong relationships, and it takes even longer to repair relationships that have been damaged. Approach all groups with humility and anticipate learning about the subtle nuances of each community.

Following these key principles can help build trusting relationships with community members, leaders, and partners:

- **Do research about the community:** It is important to understand each community's culture, norms, values, power and political structures, economic conditions, social networks, demographic trends, and history. It is also important to pay attention to how community members themselves define community. This may be the block where people live, it may be where they worship, or it may be their circle of friends. Additionally, become aware of the community's history of collaborating with other programs at the agency, with other agencies, and with partners, including the barriers they have faced when engaging with these different groups.
    - *Once the communities and/or populations have been identified, seek out information about history, context, current events, etc*. Start by googling! Read local articles and blogs. Seek out websites for community organizations, faith-based organizations, advocacy organizations, etc.
    - *Connect with local government and/or Tribal government partners in the area that may already have a relationship with the agency* and ask them about their knowledge of and relationship with the community/population. Find out who else from the agency may have worked with this same group(s) and ask them about trusted leaders to reach out to.
    - *Reach out to colleagues* to ask about their past or current work with the community/population you're working with.
    - *Connect with trusted leaders in the community.* Ask them about their community and its pressing concerns. Learn about additional resources that will help gain a better understanding of the community.

- **Do research about yourself:** Identify your own biases, privileges, and limitations before engaging with a community or potential partner including:
    - Assumptions or stereotypes about this community
    - Assumptions that may negatively impact interactions or efforts
    - Cultural norms and values and how they align with those of the community

    - Assessment of who is the most effective person to lead the effort. This may not be agency staff. It could be a trusted community partner.
    - Know the history of how the agency has interacted with the identified communities it plans to engage.
    - Did that community ask for changes that were not adopted or acted upon?

- **Be proactive:** When working on a specific project or trying to address certain health issues, reach out to potential partners and community members as early as possible. Per EJ Principle #7: communities have the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

- **Allow community members to self-identify:** Remember that cultural identities are dynamic, how people identify is a personal choice, and that people are both individuals and members of various groups. Communities and individuals have intersectional identities, which means they are members of more than one group, some of which may have been historically marginalized or oppressed.
    - When in doubt, ask how people prefer to self-identify!

- **Prioritize unheard perspectives:** Give space and power to the perspectives of those whose voices are least heard. For example, elderly immigrants have insights to share but may not feel comfortable attending a town hall. Going to a senior center where they regularly gather may be a better way to reach them. Listen with the intent to take action on the needs expressed by the community. Recognize that individuals have different perspectives, and no perspective should be valued more than another.
    - Ask "who's not at the table?" and proactively seek out those folks. Ask directly how they prefer to engage and accommodate needs and preferences as much as possible.
    - Listen to the needs different groups express, and take clear, detailed, and diligent notes to refer back to.

- **Value others' time:** Never expect community members to volunteer their time or expertise. Value what community members bring to the project through compensation, reimbursement, and/or support for one of their priorities.
    - Ensure that adequate funds are available to compensate or reimburse community members. Research and know the agency's community compensation policy and ensure that everything is in order to make this a smooth and quick process for community members involved.
    - When community members share community priorities that may be outside of the project's scope, find resources or individuals to connect them with. Seek additional resources in the agency, other state agencies, local governments, etc., that might be able to address the needs and directly connect them to the community member(s) who expressed the need.

    - Communities are diverse and will often have a different understanding, or differing cultural and social approaches to time, timeliness, and urgency from other communities, and from the agency's understanding of time. Be sure to have flexibility and work closely with the community to clearly set and communicate any commitment to deadlines and government processes.

- **Avoid tokenism:** Individuals should never be expected to speak on behalf of, or represent, an entire community. Nor should an individual or small group be invited to participate solely because they "check the box" of an identity or perspective.
    - No community is a monolith, and no single person (or even multiple people) can speak for an entire community. Engage with as many different people in different settings as possible to get a more holistic, diverse, and nuanced understanding of the issue being explored.
    - Honor the perspective and believe the experiences that the individual or small group shares. What they share may resonate with many whom they consider part of their community but recognize that they are only speaking on their own behalf.
    - Learning from different, but similar perspectives can expand understanding of a broader community experience. This may happen through reading media written by people who share similar identities.

- **Recognize strengths and assets:** Even communities that experience the greatest health and economic inequities have strengths, assets, and resources that should be acknowledged and leveraged.
    - Seek to identify and understand these assets. Ask community members what their assets are (from their perspective) and highlight and amplify these as much as possible.

- **Ensure communication is ongoing:** Collaboration requires continual opportunities for conversation and sharing.
    - Use two-way communication methods familiar to partners and community members. Avoid making assumptions, ask!
    - Ask community partners how frequently and in what formats they would like to communicate and what information is priority for them.

- **Be transparent:** Be honest and forthcoming about the purpose of the project and how the input will be used.
    - Only make promises that will be kept and make sure to follow through on commitments. Not following through can erode the trust that has been built.
    - Be clear about what is being asked and what is being offered in return. Use plain talk appropriate for the community being engaged.

- **Meet people where they are:** Be flexible. Go to the community—where members gather—and work to build relationships and trust. Look for opportunities to learn about the community by attending community events and meeting with community groups.
    - When meeting with community members, ask them what events are happening and which ones will be appropriate to attend as a guest.

STEP 2: Suggested Process to Identify Overburdened Communities & Vulnerable Populations

This section provides a suggested process for identifying communities and populations who are important to engage prior to taking agency actions that could adversely affect human health and the surrounding environment. Before conducting any outreach or starting any engagement, it is important to identify and learn about the communities and populations that you will interact with in the process. By the end of this section, you should have a clearer idea of who you need to engage and why.

WHO IS INCLUDED IN "OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES"? WHO IS INCLUDED IN "VULNERABLE POPULATIONS"?

The HEAL Act defines "overburdened communities" and "vulnerable populations" (see pg. 11). While groupings of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations are often discussed as one, it is important to make the following distinctions.

"Overburdened communities" are geographic areas where vulnerable populations face combined, multiple environmental harms and health impacts. "Vulnerable populations" are populations who may experience greater risk of environmental harm and health impacts, or reduced ability to cope with that risk. Vulnerability is often determined by external structural and systemic factors, such as experiences of marginalization or discrimination because of one's race or income, as well as access to health care, education, transportation, and other resources, services, or socioeconomic demographics. Vulnerability is not the same as sensitivity to environmental harm and health impacts, which is determined by biological factors such as age or health condition. Vulnerability and sensitivity are closely linked, however, as many factors that determine vulnerability to environmental harm also influence one's health and well-being, generally.

The Washington Tracking Network Environmental Health Disparities Map may be one helpful tool to help visualize these communities, by identifying census tracks where environmental disparities put people's health most at risk. This includes census tracts that-are ranked 9 or 10 on the map.

"Overburdened communities" and "vulnerable populations" are the terms used and defined in the HEAL Act, however, use other language that does not other or dehumanize communities and individuals when speaking directly to community members. As stated in Tema Okun's *White Dominant Culture,* "Assigning characteristics could be sometimes damaging to a community since they are used as terms and standards without being pro-actively named or

chosen by the group." It is important to think about how an issue is framed as well as how a message will come across to community members. Speaking to specific assets and/or EJ concerns in a community can help with this language.

Example of what NOT to say that could come across as dehumanizing, and could even be triggering:

> "I am reaching out to you because you're a member of an overburdened community/vulnerable population that is experiencing a wide range of EJ issues."

Example of what to say that recognizes the work this community is doing and identifies a specific EJ concern affecting specific populations:

> "I am reaching out to you because I know your community is working on multiple projects to address the air quality issues that are especially affecting children and people of color."

It is also important to consider the implications of labeling communities as "overburdened" or populations as "vulnerable" and how they may influence community engagement and program or service delivery.

EJ is a discipline with evidence-based studies, analyses, and processes that work to understand how to protect all individuals from environmental degradation and to redress the burden of unequal risk. The EJ research and literature makes clear who is most overburdened and negatively impacted by environmental harm. As such, engagement efforts connected to EJ must be focused on people of color, people with low incomes, people who are linguistically isolated, and Tribal nations.

POPULATIONS OF FOCUS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE THESE POPULATIONS IN YOUR EJ DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

People of color:

- Systemic racism
- Redlining
- Persisting segregation
- Targeting communities of color with environmental hazards
- Race shown to be the biggest predictors for where hazardous waste facilities/toxic facilities to be cited

People with low incomes:

- Routinely under-engaged and overlooked in government and industry decision making processes
- Targeting low-income communities with environmental hazards due to perceived powerlessness

- Experience significantly higher levels of adverse health and environmental risk
- Among the populations with the fewest resources to reduce their capacity to protect themselves from environmental injustices

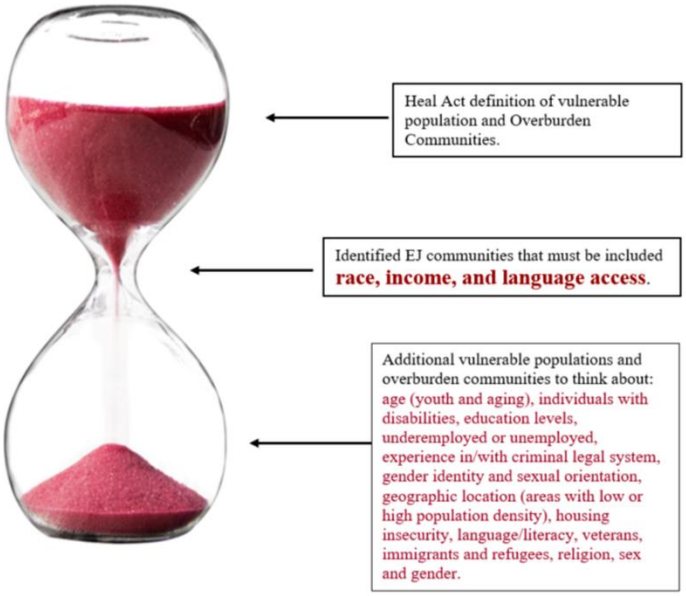
Tribal nations: Tribes face the legacy of settler colonialism and the dispossession of their ancestral lands. Through Federal recognition, tribal nations are sovereign governing bodies with inherent rights to the natural and cultural resources of their homelands. Treaties were signed by most of the Washington tribal nations that establish a co-management system with the State over resources and lands. Tribal members retain inherent, natural, cultural, and treaty rights to specific areas in Washington.

- Initial treaty violations and degradation/destruction of Tribes' natural and cultural resources and ancestral homelands.
- Lack of access to and complete elimination/extinction of traditional resources
- Declined health outcomes and increased environmental harm

Urban Indians and Indigenous Populations: Tribal members and descendants of Indian tribes who are not presently living within their Tribal community on a Tribal reservation may sometimes refer to themselves as Urban Indians and/or Indigenous. Indian and Indigenous identity is nuanced, though many who identify with this population may consider access to their tribal cultural and ancestral ties a critical component to their health and livelihood. Unless they are a member of a Washington tribe, these populations have no expressed right to ecological systems in Washington.

HOURGLASS CONCEPT AND VISUAL

The purpose of this process is to (1) identify specific communities and populations who are experiencing the greatest environmental burdens in Washington and focus engagement on those who may experience the most environmental and health risks, and (2) identify who lives in those communities to ensure they are being engaged in ways that are meaningful, relevant, and beneficial to them.



Like an hourglass, this process of identifying communities and populations begins broadly, then narrows down to specific groups that need to be engaged, and then broadens back out to consider the intersections of other identities that may make individuals within these communities more susceptible to

environmental harm or reduce their capacity to protect themselves from environmental injustice.

PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Prior to engaging with communities, it is crucial to know history including their needs, assets, current issues, and concerns. This knowledge goes a long way in building meaningful relationships. The following information helps guide a foundational understanding of what steps to take when identifying overburdened communities and vulnerable populations. While there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to this effort, the following three steps are helpful practices to undertake before going into a community.

Step 1 (top half of the hourglass): The first step of the hourglass process is building a demographic and environmental context to inform place-based activities. Available screening tools can help identify an overburdened community and vulnerable populations. While this step is beneficial in informing decision-making, it is important to note the limitations of each of these resources and tools according to their methodologies and quality of data, and to keep a critical eye out for communities and populations that may not have been included.

Use the worksheet in *Appendix A* to help guide you through this process.

Step Two (middle/narrow portion of the hourglass): The next step requires naming specific communities and populations that are identified in the worksheet listed as Appendix A at the end of this document. These questions have been answered to provide an example; however, responses will vary by program and agency. For engagement with Tribal nations, review each agency's Tribal Engagement and Consultation Plan.

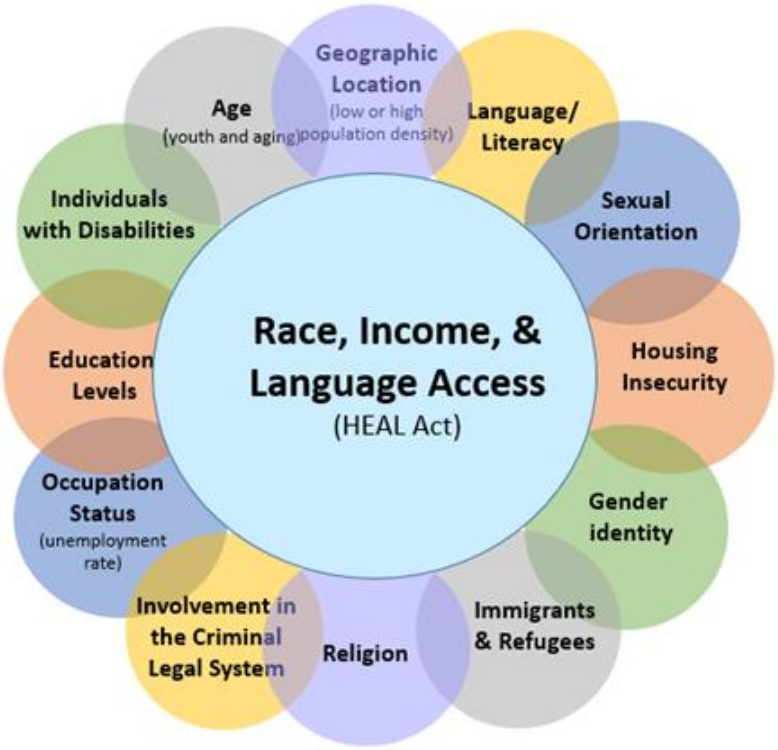
- *What communities are you going to focus on and why?* On a basic level, one should focus on communities and persons most impacted. For example, people living near timber harvests or people vulnerable to pollution from derelict vessels.
- *What populations are you focusing on and why?* You should prioritize engagement with populations that have been historically ignored, overlooked for health disparities and overburdened with environmental effects. By choosing these populations, the most vulnerable now have an opportunity for full and fair participation in decision-making about state work occurring in their communities. These populations include:
    - Limited English Proficiency (individuals who do not speak English their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English)
    - Linguistically Isolated Households (some communities may not have a low-income population but they can be still cut off from decision making opportunities, have sensitive populations and 65+ community members)
    - Populations living in poverty
    - People with disabilities
    - People with social vulnerability to hazards

    - Sensitive populations (unsheltered people, people with existing health conditions, etc.)
- *What EJ concerns do communities and populations already face?* Low-income communities and communities of color generally experience greater risk for health disparities. This is due, in part, to disproportionate exposure to hazards such as living in close proximity to potentially hazardous and federal superfund sites, as well as experiencing possible harm from waste-water discharge. For example, Yakima, Tri-Cities and the area from Seattle to Tacoma have been identified as zones in Washington state with high Hispanic populations that have greater exposure to environmental dangers and health disparities in comparison to other areas.
- *What kind of language access services do these communities and populations need?* It is important to distinguish interpretation and translation needs for the community. Interpretation deals with spoken language in real time while translation focuses on written content. The federal Department of Justice's Safe Harbor provision calls for written translations of vital documents for each Limited English Proficiency group that meets the threshold (5% of the total population or 1000 individuals, whichever is less). Translation services should be made available in various forms and media, this should include: ADA services where identified, translated informational flyers in identified languages featured in mainstream newspapers, advertisements in culturally relevant newspapers, translated information on social media platforms etc.
- *What health inequities do these communities and populations already face?* For example, air quality, asthma, heat exhaustion, etc.
    - *Would the agency's action exacerbate or create health inequities for the identified population? If so, for whom and how?* Low-income and minority communities are at risk. There may be affluent communities that have large minority populations that may not seem vulnerable due to the prosperity of the residents; however, these groups can still have sensitive populations, social vulnerability to hazards, people with disabilities, 65+ age group, and language barriers that prevent full and fair participation.
    - *Are there alternatives or mitigation activities the agency could do to address potentially disproportionate adverse impacts, and opportunities to enhance environmental and health benefits?* An EJ analysis should be conducted on every project to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. This analysis is often a requirement under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. Also, asking the right questions before undertaking a project is the best way for agencies to discover if environmental impacts are present and immediate:
        - Is there substantial legitimate justification for the project?
        - Are there any effective alternative practices that would result in less-disparate impacts?

        - Can you demonstrate that the justification for the project is not a pretext for discrimination?
        - Have you identified impacts on communities of color or low-income communities?
        - Are there any disproportionate impacts?
        - Are there any mitigation measures or alternatives available?
        - Does the project create a discriminatory impact?
- *Has the demographic data been analyzed? Would the agency's action alleviate existing health and environmental justice inequities? If so, for whom and how?* Gathering demographic information and analyzing it is the best way for agencies to understand where the vulnerable populations are and how to effectively work within those communities without causing harm or exacerbating health and EJ inequities.

Step Three (bottom half of the hourglass): Steps 1 and 2 identify the HEAL Act community members: the overburdened communities and vulnerable populations (based on race, income, and language access). In step 3, the goal is to identify additional communities/populations previously not covered in the previous steps – taking an intersectional view and broadening the scope of folks to engage with. These questions have been answered to provide an example; however, as above, responses will vary by program and agency.

- *Who did we miss?* Including intersectionality of populations within a community can show multiple dimensions of marginalization experienced by vulnerable populations. Racial and socioeconomic inequities are the most prevalent indicator of EJ risk. Here are other community populations to consider as vulnerable populations:
    - Age (youth and aging), individuals with disabilities, education levels, occupation status (unemployment rate), significant employers in the area, involvement in the criminal legal system, gender identity, sexual orientation, geographic location (areas with low or high population density), housing insecurity, language/literacy, military experience/veterans, immigrants and refugees, religion, those who may be employed in a given area but who may not live there.
- *Who did we include?* The populations identified in the HEAL Act are low-income, with limited English proficiency, and racial minority communities and populations. Racial and socioeconomic inequities are the most prevalent indicator of EJ risk.
- *Who may not fit into the EJ lens?* Individuals or organizations responsible for creating the environmental injustice(s) that violates standing laws; these injustices can be but are not limited to food deserts, air pollution, water pollution, etc. Access to a healthy environment should be a fundamental right for all.



Developing a comprehensive overview of the community allows for a more in-depth introduction to the community before the in-person outreach. The research aids in identifying the other needs of communities based on the community member's identities and intersections among those identified in the HEAL Act as overburdened communities and vulnerable populations (race, income, language access).

Additional points to consider for pre-engagement with community:

- Allow for sufficient time to conduct a baseline assessment of the community using the tools listed in Step 1 to characterize and build knowledge of the community, its diversity, and its needs.
- Identify individuals, groups, organizations, or agencies with legitimate interests in the community to learn more about its character.
- Identify community organizations that serve overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
- Learn about what the community supports to understand the community's perceptions, attitudes, and community values by using media sources, local government public meetings, etc.
- Identify potential barriers from the baseline assessment of the community (e.g., access to transportation/transportation cost burden, access to broadband/technology, literacy, childcare, etc.).

STEP 3: Select a Method of Engagement

These Methods of Engagement were adopted from the Department of Health Community Engagement Guide.

There are many different methods to engage and collaborate with communities, each depending on the context and the community. Meeting with communities in-person is often best for establishing and building trusting relationships, especially when forming a new connection. However, technology has increased options to connect with communities and partners and may help increase the reach for some types of engagement activities.

Some initial questions to ask community partners:

- How can the agency best serve the community you're working with?
- What are the best ways to engage with the intended community (if known)?
- Are the engagement opportunities culturally appropriate and accessible to the community? How will these be determined?
- Do you need to consider using multiple channels/provide multiple opportunities for engagement?
- Will the selected engagement method(s) be accessible to the community?
- Are the questions for community members understandable, open-ended, not leading, and unbiased?
- Is an active consent for the intended engagement needed?
- Does the project's timeline need to be adjusted to allow for community engagement to be done in a respectful manner? (i.e. - don't rush or sacrifice community engagement)
- What are the drawbacks and unintended burdens by choosing the method of engagement being considered?
- Have you researched opportunities to align community engagement requests with other state agencies that share similar goals?

After answering these questions, use the worksheet in *Appendix B* to identify the best method of engagement for your specific project.

STEP 4: Identify Common Barriers and Potential Strategies

This list of Common Barriers and Potential Strategies was adopted from the Department of Health Community Engagement Guide.

Successful community engagement requires addressing barriers faced by community members and partners.

List of common barriers and potential strategies:

- **Language:** Community members who prefer to communicate in a language other than English or have vision or hearing needs will need language assistance services to

participate. For example, should you use the Washington State military Department Language Mapping Tool. The map visually represents limited English proficiency populations by county across Washington.

- *Potential Strategies:*
  - Identify the linguistic needs of a community by talking to community leaders and key informants, and by reviewing language data.
  - Translate all meeting materials and announcements into the top languages spoken within the area or community.
  - Let people know ahead of time that free interpretation services, that should include sign language and real-time interpretation.
  - If a language other than English is predominant among the community members, the meeting should be run in that language and the English speakers are offered interpretation services.
  - Know where to secure assistive listening devices when needed and seek to hold in-person events in spaces that have hearing loop technology. Use closed captioning at online events.
  - Use Plain Talk in all communications; Executive Order 05-03 requires all state agencies to use simple and clear language when communicating with community members and businesses.
- *Important notes about interpretation services:*
  - Not all interpretation is free and may be governed by a master contract.
  - Simultaneous and consecutive interpretation have different cost points and are not always covered by master contracts.
  - Simultaneous interpretation (where the interpreter translates at the same time as the speaker, in a separate audio feed) is ideal for larger events, while consecutive interpretation can work for small group conversations.

- **Culture:** There may need to accommodations for certain cultural values to ensure all members are able to participate.
  - *Potential Strategies:*
    - Be mindful of cultural and religious observances and events when choosing a meeting date and time.
    - Ask community leaders or key informants about the most culturally appropriate way to engage community members and then adapt your approach.
    - Use inclusive images, graphics, and icons in visual materials.

- **Location:** It may be difficult for some communities that are further removed from large city centers or accessible public transportation, or folks who live in rural communities to attend in person engagement activities.
  - *Potential Strategies:*

        - Meet people where they are at (physically). Hold the event at a location where the community regularly meets or gathers.
        - Choose a location that is accessible by public transportation and/or have free and ample parking.
        - Offer travel reimbursement and lodging.
        - For multiple events or meetings, consider holding them in different locations.
        - Hold the meeting virtually (but ensure that folks have access to the internet and the virtual meeting platform used).

- **Intercommunity Dynamics:** It may be inappropriate to bring all the members of one community together in a shared space because of inter-community relationships, power structures, or other norms.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Do research ahead of time to learn about any potential intercommunity dynamics that may create barriers for some members to engage.
        - Talk with community leaders and other partners to get their perspective.
        - Consider what part of the community is disempowered within status-quo power structure.
        - Learn from other organizations and agency programs who have worked with the same community.

- **Privilege and Implicit Bias:** Implicit bias refers to the associations, stereotypes, and assumptions that we make about people. Our biases can affect how we interact with others and our relationships with community members.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Do research about yourself before engaging with any community you are not a member of.
        - Commit to continuous, critical self-reflection.
        - Be humble, respectful, and honest. Admit mistakes when you make them.
        - Consider that you may not be the best person to engage with a community. Establish partnerships to do engagement when appropriate for interacting with the community.

- **Distrust of Government:** Communities may not trust government because of past historical injustices. Or, they may have had personal negative experiences interacting with state agencies, or other governmental organizations.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Take the time to learn about the historical injustices or past experiences that are impacting the community you are trying to reach.

        - Recognize and own what has occurred in the past and recognize their present-day impacts. What earned and unearned privileges do you have as result of historical injustices? How may those privileges impact your ability to engage certain communities?
        - Commit to the time it will take to rebuild trust, and make sure to follow through on all promises and commitments you make to the community.

- **Immigration Status:** Not all community members you meet with will be U.S. citizens. Some of them may be undocumented, have Temporary Protective Status as refugees, hold Green Cards, or have other immigration statuses. It is important to acknowledge any fear or uncertainty these community members may hold, be sensitive and cognizant of the larger immigration dynamics at play in our country, and work to create trust and safety.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Ask community partners for guidance on how to make their community members feel safe and included in your activity.
        - Do not collect personal information from attendees.
        - Consider co-facilitating the event or meeting with a trusted community leader or partner.
        - Adhere to all agency agreements, policies, and/or executive/commissioner orders that prohibit coordination with Federal immigration enforcement agencies.

- **Time:** Some of the logistical aspects of community engagement take time. Plan accordingly and adapt timeline as needed to meet the needs of the community.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Think about the daily schedules of the people you're trying to engage.
        - If you will be hiring a vendor for your project, allow three months for the contracting process.
        - If your project qualifies as research, allow two months to seek approval from the Institutional Review Board.

- **Stigma:** Stigma can prevent some communities from participating, especially within certain populations, such as people living with HIV/AIDS, people experiencing homelessness, and immigration status.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Be mindful of how stigma may impact those you're trying to reach.
        - Consult with an agency or community expert on stigma reduction strategies.

- **Government Jargon and Process:** Government has its own language and way of doing things that may create unintentional barriers for people outside our agencies.
    - *Potential Strategies:*

        - Use simple, clear language in all communications and avoid overusing acronyms.
        - Check assumptions about what aspects of the way we do our work is common knowledge and take care to explain things clearly.
        - Clearly communicate the intent of your engagement and what that engagement is producing.

- **Technological Barriers:** Remote and online engagement can work well for some communities, but technology may prevent some community members from participating.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - Choose a virtual meeting platform participants are familiar with.
        - Review information about the technological requirements ahead of time to make sure they are clear, straightforward, and not overly burdensome.
        - Ensure technological support is available before and during the event.
- **Competing Priorities:** Do not expect community members to drop everything in their lives to participate in a project for the agency. They have full lives with many responsibilities and commitments that may take priority. You may be able to mitigate some of these competing priorities through thoughtful planning.
    - *Potential Strategies:*
        - *Family:* When engaging with parents or caregivers in person, consider needs for child care or adult care, and provide options for remote engagement.
        - *Food:* The sharing of food to bring people together is common across cultures. If possible, arrange healthy and culturally appropriate snacks or meals when holding community meetings or focus groups. Consider using a restaurant frequented by community members as an option to provide food. Make sure to ask community members about dietary restrictions and preferences ahead of time.
        - *Work:* Often, community members are not reimbursed for their time whereas partners who work for other agencies and organizations may be able to participate during work time. Look into options for providing incentives and travel reimbursement to decrease barriers for participation. Additionally, people who work full-time may prefer evenings or weekends.
        - *School:* If engaging students or those within the academic community, consider the time of year and school schedules. It may be difficult to engage during school hours, the start of the school session, exam times, or school breaks.

STEP 5: Create an Evaluation Guide

This section was adapted from the Department of Health Community Engagement Guide.

Create an evaluation guide with the community and/or partners based on how they intend to measure or define success. Below are several evaluation questions to consider before, during, and after community engagement:

When	Evaluation Questions
Before Community Engagement	How was the need for this project identified?
	Are the right community members involved?
	Does the structure and process allow for all voices to be heard, especially those impacted by historically and contemporary injustices?
	How will you support your partners or community members? What training, information or resources will they need?
	How will you intentionally provide space for those impacted by injustices to have their issues heard and addressed?
	How does the community measure/define success?
During Community Engagement	How well does the group work together?
	Who has a voice and who doesn't?
	How will the group make decisions?
	How are conflicts or disagreements handled?
	Who leads the engagement efforts, meetings, or events?
	How are community members involved in developing the project?
	If you did a stakeholder analysis, did your results have the desired effect? Were they helpful?
	How did you ensure your community engagement effort was culturally and linguistically appropriate?
	Did stakeholder involvement improve the work, increase effectiveness, or increase political and community support of the effort?
After Community Engagement	Who came up with the project goals and plan?
	What could you have done better to identify and involve community partners and representatives?
	What strategies did you use to ensure all voices were heard?
	When partners who have been impacted by injustices or represent groups who are under-represented or historically marginalized brought forward issues, how were those addressed?
	Did your partners feel supported? What could be improved?
	How did you loop back to the community to thank them and let them know next steps and the impact of their involvement?

Part 2: Engaging with Community

STEP 1: Reach out to Community Partners

Working with a community partner, such as a community-based organization, informal group, or community-identified leader, can help with conducting community engagement that is accessible, inclusive, and respectful of the community's priorities and culture. Ideally, a community partner is an organization or individual who is part of the community you're hoping to engage with, or who works closely with members of that community. That partner can provide an invaluable perspective and a richer understanding of what types of engagement work well or don't work well with that community. Identifying and working with more than one community partner can offer more depth and breadth to the perspectives and understanding of best engagement practices, while avoiding tokenism or the assumption of a monolithic community.

When approaching a potential community partner and throughout interactions with them, the focus should be on fostering a relationship that extends beyond a specific community engagement opportunity and respects their expertise and time. Engagement must be viewed as a collaborative effort and partnership with communities to achieve the goals of health equity and EJ. It should be part of continuous efforts to build and maintain relationships, support, and investment in communities.

When reaching out to community partners, it may be helpful to consider the following:

Before reaching out to potential community partners do research and learn more about their work and efforts, and the community. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability:

- What work/services do they offer?
    - What materials/education do they create?
    - What events do they host?
    - What are the organization's assets?
    - What support do they need?
- What is their community reach? (i.e. What portion of the population or community do they engage with? Do they have a specific focus that not all community members share or are aware of?)
- Who are they already working with within your agency/outside of your agency?
- Have they engaged with your agency previously?
    - If so, what is the history of engagement?
        - Is relationship repairing needed etc.?
- What spaces are they already participating in (committees, task force, etc.)?
    - What spaces can be tapped into as a starting point to build partnerships with community partners and groups (ex: Community coalitions/ groups, local or statewide workgroups etc.)?

- Note: It is important to not overburden communities and to be proactive in coming to communities in spaces where they already gather.

Connect with internal agency divisions, programs, and partners who may already be engaging with these community partners.

- This is essential for coordinating internal efforts and for getting input from staff members who already have working relationships and built trust with the community. If it feels appropriate, these colleagues might be able to introduce you to the potential community partner or advise you as to the best point of contact and means of contacting them.
- Communicate opportunities for engagement (as applicable).

Reach out to potential community partners. This may be done through phone, email, Zoom, an in-person meeting – regardless of how this initial communication takes place, it should take place in a format and medium comfortable to the potential community partner (ex. some community partners may prefer a phone call to an email). When first communicating, clearly explain:

- Who you are.
- What you're doing.
- Why you're reaching out to community.
- Why you're reaching out to them as a potential partner.
- How you would like to partner with them.

Set expectations together for engagement (refer to part 1 for key principles, methods, and barriers to engagement). This may include:

- Co-creating an engagement plan and timeline.
    - Get feedback from community partners ahead of larger engagements to co-create agenda.
    - Address and develop solutions for any barriers to engagement that you and your community partners identify.
    - Work with community partners to ensure outreach to community members is culturally and linguistically appropriate.
    - Work with community partners to determine effective methods for:
        - Keeping community informed/following up with community throughout the project life cycle.
        - Sharing resources, notes from meetings, next steps, and information.
        - Establishing mutual accountability. (I.e. What does the community need from you? What do you need to move forward with your work?).
- Discussing equitable exchange and power sharing between agencies and communities.
    - For example: Agencies provide investment and resources for communities, communities share knowledge/expertise etc.
- Planning to have multiple touch points for follow-up to stay accountable to community members you meet with, keep them informed and involved, and let them know how

their time and input is being incorporated into decision-making processes and/or how you would like to include them directly in decision-making processes (refer to the section on accountability below.

STEP 2: Address Known Barriers to Engagement

It is the responsibility of government agencies to identify and address potential barriers to engagement, including when working with community partners. Before starting community engagement and throughout the community engagement process, continually ask yourself:

- Which barriers did you identify in the previous section? How did you mitigate them?
- What access needs did you identify using the Accessibility Worksheet (see Appendix C)? How will you ensure these are met?
- What is your process for working with community to identify and mitigate barriers?
- What additional barriers did you encounter (that you did not anticipate)? How can you mitigate them?

When working with your community partners, it may be helpful to think through these additional considerations and how to proactively address barriers related to them:

- **Participation:** Continue to discuss and work with partners to set expectations for participation. Community partners may have competing priorities, as noted earlier. Work with community partners to develop more accessible or alternative ways to participate. Be flexible and proactive in reaching out to partners.
    - *For example:* If community partners are unable to attend a meeting, provide alternative times, 1:1 meeting, follow-up survey etc., send out discussion notes following meetings and highlight decisions made.
- **Engagement:** Maintain active community engagement by centering it around community needs and priorities.
    - *For example:* Hold meetings in the evenings or on weekends if those times work best for community partners, hold to community timelines, etc.

  Make space for collaboration, creativity, and innovation vs. setting a rigid agenda focused solely on agency priorities.

    - *For example:* Have more interactive meetings, have community led meetings and roles.

  Be wary of collaboration vs. tokenization. Work with community partners to co-plan feedback sessions, program implementation, etc.

- **Centering communities most impacted:** Consider how, during engagement events, spaces and facilitation can center the participation of communities most impacted.

- *For example:* In meeting spaces with multiple entities, open up space for communities historically excluded, have communities speak first, be mindful of where you sit in a space or when you decide to speak, etc.

Consider how to prioritize different community recommendations or feedback and different community needs and agendas. Consider also how to reconcile state agency limitations with expressed community needs in terms of feasibility and compromise.

Additional Considerations During Engagement:

- **Transparency/Accountability:** Be clear and upfront with community partners and attendees of any community engagement event about the purpose and objectives of the meeting and how community feedback will be utilized. (Where will it go, what is your process, what is the project timeline, etc.). Discuss with community partners the limitations of your agency to implement community recommendations.
    - Set expectations to avoid overpromising.
    - Ensure community members understand what the agency role is and what the agency can commit to and support. Provide resources and connections for where people can go for other types of support or accountability (i.e. local or federal government, specific regulatory body).
- **Representation of community partners when providing feedback and input:** Ask yourself and community partners:
    - Does this represent everyone who is most impacted and are the target communities for engagement?
    - What steps need to be taken to achieve greater representation?

Track who is providing feedback/input during engagement sessions and be wary of skewed, incomplete feedback. Take all the feedback you receive in the larger context of the information you have and be cognizant of focusing too much on only a few voices or perspectives. It may be helpful to ask yourself and your community partners:

- Where are recommendations coming from?
- Who are represented in these recommendations?
- Who is absent from the conversation and how will their perspectives be obtained?

Be transparent when sharing recommendations and feedback.

- *For Example:* If most of your feedback came from 100 members of a 1,500 member collaborative group, acknowledge that this is not representative of the entire collaborative and all members. Whose voices and perspectives might be missing?

Remember that within any given community, there will be different opinions/ perspectives. No community is a monolith. Ensure that you are speaking with multiple people and getting several perspectives.

- **Feedback:** At the end of a meeting, whether it is one-on-one or with a large group, revisit the purpose and objectives of the meeting. Ask community members if they felt the objectives were met. Offer multiple ways for feedback to be shared.
    - If interacting one-on-one, offer to listen to the feedback right after the meeting as well as offer to follow up in a day or two in case other thoughts/ideas come up.
    - If interacting with a larger group, the following options can be used singly or in combination to gather feedback. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list and you may have others you've used.
        - Short surveys that can be completed immediately after a meeting.
        - Going around a room and asking for verbal feedback (i.e. what went well? What can be improved?)
        - Using small group breakouts to ask for feedback.
        - If in a virtual meeting space, using the chat function to submit feedback.
        - Polls.
    - If you're working with a community partner, defer to them on evaluation processes and meaningful questions to ask.
    - Be aware of power dynamics when asking for feedback. For example, your agency may be providing funding to particular community organizations that are present.
    - Just like the other elements of a meeting, you want to make sure that providing input and feedback is accessible to all present.

STEP 3: Gathering Community Input and Feedback

It is important to build in a process for gathering community input and feedback when doing community engagement. This helps improve upon our practices. Information learned during a feedback session should be integrated into evaluation of your community engagement plan.

Like other information community members share with us, feedback is a gift that should be treasured. This requires us to be thoughtful about how we use the information we learn, where the information is kept, who has access to it.

- Share with community members how their feedback is incorporated into the decision-making process for each part of the project lifecycle (this needs to be clear to community and shared with them to ensure accountability and transparency and to build trust).

- Ask communities how they want to be kept informed about the project lifecycle and incorporate their suggestions into your process for report-backs to communities.

Part 3: Reflections and Follow-up

STEP 1: Incorporate Community Feedback/Input

Reevaluate, edit, and update project and program lifecycle/plan, as needed, based on community feedback after an engagement event. Repeat the steps from Part 2 for each stage of project/program lifecycle that you identified for community engagement

STEP 2: Conduct Evaluation of Community Engagement & Reflect on How to Improve

Using the evaluation guide you created under Part 2 of this framework/process guide, collect information needed to answer each of the evaluation questions. Feedback from community members should be integrated into and inform the evaluation. With community partners, project team members, and other appropriate partners and stakeholders, share what worked well and what areas need improvement. Together, form a plan to address barriers and develop solutions to improve the engagement process moving forward.

STEP 3: Maintain Community Relationships

As stated above, a central goal of community engagement is to build relationships with community members and partners that extend beyond a one-time engagement activity. Maintaining these relationships is as important as building them. It is government agencies' responsibility to maintain accountability to community partners and community members by:

- Keeping community informed and involved throughout project/program lifecycle.
- Sharing process, final findings/feedback and, specifically, how community engagement/input impacted the process of the project/program itself, including outcomes, decisions, made, etc.

Lastly, we should thank our community partners and participating community members for their time and collaboration. While this may seem obvious, it is often forgotten, and is one of the most important things we can do to maintain relationships and show community partners that we recognize and value the time and expertise they shared with us.

Appendix A: Worksheet to Identify Overburdened Communities and Vulnerable Populations

Worksheet to Identify Overburdened Communities & Vulnerable Populations		
Questions / Prompts	**Resources / Tools**	**Findings**
Geography: Which areas of the state will your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.) touch? Are there areas that rank highly for environmental health disparities (9 or 10 EHD Map ranking)?	Washington Tracking Network (WTN) Environmental Health Disparities (EHD) Map – within the EHD Map you can view census tracts by aggregate environmental health disparity ranking; disaggregate by environmental effects, environmental exposures, socioeconomic factors, or sensitive populations; or by specific measures within each of these categories *Please note: This should be tailored to your specific program or service area – for example, if you are interested in air quality impacts from wildfire smoke, you would look at EHD rankings, then compare them with rankings for PM2.5 and overlay wildfire boundary information. It may be helpful to use additional data specific to your program to inform this step.*	
Health Disparities: Identify existing health inequities impacted by your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)?	WTN – available at multiple geographic scales and health disparity measures EHD Map -- multiple layers for different health disparity concerns available	
Race: What proportion of the people impacted by your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.) are people of color? Which specific racial groups are represented? **Racial and ethnic minorities are included in the definition of vulnerable populations*	EHD Map – available by clicking on census tract and toggling to 'Race' in pop-up window Race and Ethnicity in the United States (US Census) – available at multiple levels, including state, county, census tract, etc. 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) Demographic and Housing Estimates – available at multiple levels, including state, county, census tract, etc.	
Tribal Nations:	WA Government Office of Indian Affairs Map of Reservations and Draft Treaty Ceded Land	

Which Tribes might be impacted by your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)? How might Tribes be impacted?	EHD Map Tribal Boundaries Layer – in association with most data layers, you can select "Tribal Land Boundaries" by clicking "Map Features" For engagement with Tribal nations, you should review the DOH's Tribal Relations resources. *Please note: These resources are incomplete on their own and are intended to serve as a reference point for further research. Agencies should follow existing protocol on Tribal consultation and/or collaboration.*	
Poverty and Unemployment: What is the percent of the population living in poverty who might be impacted by your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)? What is the percent unemployed in the area? **Low-income populations are included in the definition of Vulnerable populations*	WTN – available at multiple geographic scales and poverty/unemployment measures EHD Map – available at census tract level by selecting "Socioeconomic Factors" and "Population Living in Poverty <=185% of Federal Poverty Level" or "Unemployed" 2020 ACS Selected Economic Characteristics – includes poverty and employment information available at multiple levels, including state, county, census tract, etc.	
Language Access: What is the percent of Limited English Proficient population that might be impacted by your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)? Which languages are spoken by these populations?	Washington State Military Department Language Mapping Tool – available at county, sub-county, and census tract levels; includes information on widely spoken languages in Washington state People That Speak English Less Than "Very Well" in the United States (US Census) – visualization at census tract level using 2018 ACS 5-year estimates EPA EJScreen Tool – includes linguistic isolation data at census tract level EHD Map – available at census tract level via "Socioeconomic Factors" and "ACS: Limited English (LEP)"	
EJ Concerns:	EHD Map – multiple layers for different EJ concerns available	

What EJ concerns are relevant to your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)? How do these concerns overlap with some of the demographic information identified earlier in this worksheet? *The definition of vulnerable populations includes populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms; and populations of workers experiencing environmental harms.*	EPA EJScreen Tool – multiple layers for different EJ concerns available White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool – multiple layers for different EJ concerns available *Please note: These data resources are incomplete on their own and should serve as a starting place for identifying EJ concerns. Additional research, including local EJ history and concerns, Civil Rights complaints, news/media articles, and local government and community organization websites, should continue to inform this section.*	
Financial Impact: What are the potential financial impacts to communities given your agency's action (e.g., project, program, policy, etc.)? Consider the intersectional aspects and downstream effects of environmental harms. How might your agency's action impact low-income households in both the short and long-term?	EPA EJScreen Tool and EHD Map have indicators for federal poverty guidelines that can help individuals map out a geographical area's income range.	

Appendix B: Worksheet to Determine Which Engagement Method to Utilize

Worksheet to Determine Which Engagement Method to Utilize		
Stage of Community Engagement Spectrum	**Methods**	**Resources / Tools**
Inform *Purpose:* to provide information or address immediate needs/issues. *When to use:* when there is no alternative due to urgency, regulatory reasons or legal boundaries.	• Town Halls • Community meetings • Media • Social media • Materials • Web	*Technology options for virtual meetings:* • Facebook Live for town halls and community meetings • YouTube Live for town halls and community meetings • WhatsApp to encourage chat dialogue Video conference (for remote participation, feedback and testimony) • Online town hall using Twitter Town Hall (to increase geographic reach) *For in-person town halls and community meetings:* • Identify primary audience and vision for the meeting or event. • You will get the highest turnout if you host the meeting in a place where the community naturally and regularly meets on their own or combine it with an existing meeting. • Set a clear agenda with a designated moderator and speakers. • If appropriate, engage local media to help publicize the event. Identify communications channels that will best reach the primary audience. *For external communications (media/social media/materials/web):* • Begin by developing a communications guide. • Identify communications channels that will best reach the primary audience. • Ensure messages are tailored to your audience.
Consult *Purpose:* get and incorporate feedback.	• Focus groups • Interviews • Surveys • Stakeholder groups	*Technology options:* • Online focus group using Facebook Groups or GoToMeeting for focus groups. • Interviews via phone or in-person • Paper-based and mail surveys may be effective for surveys.

When to use: you'd like to improve an existing service/program but options (of change) are limited.		• Online or electronic surveys to broaden reach (Survey Monkey, Opinio or online polls are examples). • Video conference to allow remote attendance at stakeholder groups. *For focus groups:* • Identify a trained facilitator and note-taker. • Carefully plan how you will organize and recruit for the focus groups. Bring individuals together with a common characteristic, and structure the conversation to ensure all participants can express their honest opinions. • Provide incentives to thank participants for their time. • Prepare your questions so you can benefit from group dialogue. Questions should be open and elicit group discussion. • Recording the focus group may be beneficial for note-taking and facilitation purposes, but should be carefully considered because it may inhibit participation from some people. *For interviews:* • Interviews let you explore a particular subject more in depth, and allow you to learn something you might not get from a survey. They can also be used to build and strengthen partnerships. • Use as a starting point to help you plan other community engagement efforts. The insight and perspective you can gain from community leaders can help you plan more effective and culturally appropriate community meetings, focus groups, and community mobilization efforts. • Carefully plan your interview script and approach. If you choose to conduct key informant interviews, identify community leaders who know their community and the specific health topic or issue well. • If you choose to conduct interviews with community members, choose a location and time that will maximize your opportunities for connecting with members of your target population. *For surveys:*

		• Surveys can be used to collect information about attitudes, beliefs, opinions, needs, assets, and behaviors of the community you wish to engage. • They are a quick way of getting information from a larger number of people and may be more convenient for the participant and cost less. • Surveys can gain informal community feedback about a specific project. *For stakeholder groups:* • Identify your primary, secondary, and key stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those who will be directly affected by your project. Secondary stakeholders include those who are directly involved with the primary audience/population of your project, or whose lives may be affected indirectly. Key stakeholders are those who have the greatest influence including policymakers, the media, and community leaders. • Plan to engage stakeholder groups early in the process. This helps ensure transparency throughout your project. • Conduct a stakeholder analysis or stakeholder mapping to understand their concerns and interests.
Involve *Purpose:* to ensure needs and interests are considered. *When to use:* when community perspective and buy-in is necessary to be successful in project implementation.	• Audience and user testing • Advisory groups • Steering committees • Community conversations	*Technology options:* • Audience and user testing can be done in-person, via phone or email, or through online platforms. • Video conference to increase participation in council, advisory or committee meetings. • GoToWebinar and other online platforms can facilitate virtual community conversations. *For audience and user testing:* • Audience and user testing are ideal for helping you understand how your primary audience may respond to your messages, materials, or information. The goal is to understand their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, barriers, and cues to act. • Clearly define your primary audience and think about what you want them to know or do. • Health promotion, behavior change, and communication theories can help you plan your testing. • For user testing, choose a technique that fits your session goals and plan ahead for any equipment

		needs. It may be easiest to hold the usability testing in a location with laptops. • For both audience and user testing, make sure to pilot your questions and test ahead of time. *For advisory groups and steering committees:* • Advisory boards and steering committees are ideal for keeping your project connected to the big picture. Many groups meet on a quarterly basis to provide strategic direction, but some meet more frequently for more hands-on work. There may already be an existing group or committee that you can engage with. • The effectiveness of these groups depends on the structure that is put in place at the beginning including choosing the right members, thoughtfully planning and facilitating meetings, and setting clear expectations. • Advisory boards or councils can be created to bring voices to the table who are often not well represented in decision-making, for example: youth. • Plan a formal onboarding for your committee, council, or board members to ensure they have a similar foundation related to your project and equity overall. *For community conversations:* • Build a team to determine the goals for the conversation and host the event. Your team should include members of the community to ensure their own goals, interests, and issues are well represented. • Choose a facilitator that is experienced and can create a trusting environment with the participants. Sometimes it is best to choose someone from within the community and sometimes it is more appropriate to choose someone who is neutral and outside of the community. • Create an inviting environment and structure the room for dialogue. Tables in a 'U' shape or in circles are ideal for small group conversations.
Collaborate *Purpose:* to partner and share decision-making.	• Collective impact • Coalition building • Partnership building	*Technology options:* • Bring people together in a shared space for successful collective impact initiatives and coalition building. • Video conference to allow remote participation in collective impact initiatives and coalition building.

When to use: when community members have a strong desire to participate and you have done the pre-work to build trust		• Ongoing collaboration with existing partners can assist with successful partnership building. *For collective impact initiatives:* • A 'Collective Impact' model brings organizations together to work toward a common goal through a structured framework. • The five core conditions of the Collective Impact framework are: 1) Develop a common agenda, 2) Use shared measurement, 3) Build on mutually-reinforcing activities, 4) Engage in continuous communications, 5) Provide a backbone to move the work forward *For coalition building:* • Coalitions can be used to influence public policy, promote behavior change in communities, and build a healthy community. • Some of the drivers for building coalitions include: • To respond to negative events in the community (e.g. increased suicides). • New information becomes available (e.g. new research about a specific disease). • Circumstances or rules change (e.g. a new law). • New funding is available (e.g. a federal grant that requires a coalition). • There's a threat to the community (e.g. an important service might get cut) • Coalitions include a core group of stakeholders, community opinion leaders, and policy makers. *For partnership building:* • Partnerships can be formal collaborations just between two organizations, or can result in the formation of a committee, coalition, council, or other group of partners with representatives from various organizations, and therefore be more strategic in nature. • Partnerships can also be informal agreements or collaborations that are short term and project specific. • Determine which partners and what type of partnership is appropriate for your specific project or problem you are trying to address.
Defer To	• Community immersion • Community mobilization	*Technology options:* • Use relevant social media platform for communities that may prefer that method.

Purpose: to support and follow a community's lead. *When to use:* when community members want to own a project and you're committed in the long-term.		*For community immersion:* • Support initiatives and projects that are important to the community, even if it is not an agency priority. • Attend community events and gatherings with the intent of listening and learning. *For community mobilization:* • Ensure you have strong leaders and provide them the support they need. • Establish a formal structure, which may include a steering committee and subcommittees. Ensure the six essential functions of community mobilization efforts are covered: 1) Providing overall strategic direction, 2) Facilitating dialogue between partners, 3) Managing data collection and analysis, 4) Planning communications, 5) Coordinating outreach, 6) Fundraising • Develop guiding documents such as organizational charts, rules of operation or bylaws, policy statements, and formal letters of agreement. • Engage community partners who share priorities and interests. Consider partners who work in other agencies, in health or social service organizations, business owners, policy makers, media representatives, faith leaders, and others who have significant influence in their community.

Appendix C: Accessibility Checklist

Policies regarding accessibility vary across agencies and DNR is no exception. Consult with the External Affairs Department for guidance. In general, some best practices and additional considerations include:

Community Compensation:

- *Timing:* You should have your community compensation methodology prepared before you begin planning your event. Make sure you that you have enough resources available to compensate all community members who attend.
- *Actions:*
    - Develop a process for equitable compensation method
    - Provide multiple payment options: gift cards, direct deposit, checks, etc.
- *Resources:*
    - Washington State Office of Equity Lived Experience Compensation Interim Guidelines and Best Practices

Identifying Accessibility Preferences and Needs: Survey community partners ahead of time to identify accessibility preferences and needs (include questions to assess access and functional needs). Ask again about access needs in introduction of meetings (keep track of access needs).

- *Timing:* This should be done at least 2-3 weeks before any in-person or virtual meeting date to ensure you can secure accommodations, translation services, etc. ahead of time.
- *Actions:*
    - At the start of meetings during introductions, ask about access needs.
        - For example, "I need close captioning for this Zoom call are there any other access needs for folks on this call?".
    - Provide interpretation (in-language and/or ASL) during meetings.
    - Provide simultaneous or consecutive interpretation.
        - If providing consecutive interpretation, allot additional time for the meeting to ensure adequate time.
    - Translate all materials into the languages spoken by the community members you're meeting with.
    - Provide ASL interpretation and closed-captioning.
    - Ensure all materials including PowerPoints are accessible.
        - When creating PowerPoint slides:
            - Minimize the amount of text on each slide.
            - The information shared should tell a coherent story.
            - Incorporate graphics/images.
            - Check for color-blindness useability. Avoid combination of colors that blend together [dark black/dark blue/dark lettering on light background (preferably white)]

        - When sharing handouts, be thoughtful about the information included in them. For example, don't just distribute copies of the slides. Instead add context to the information presented in the slides.
    - Avoid jargon and technical language that people may not understand or be familiar with. Keep communication clear, direct, and concise.
    - Use plain and clearly legible font for any written materials or slides and ensure that published materials are legible.
    - Make space for support people – let people know they can have someone come with them to provide support including support animals.
- *Resources:*
    - Download the Atkinson Hyperlegible Font | Braille Institute
    - Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities (microsoft.com)
    - Making information accessible for all | European Blind Union (euroblind.org)
    - Virtual Meetings: Accessibility Checklist & Best Practices (americanbar.org)
    - C4PA Plain Talk Resources

Translate Written Materials:

- *Timing:* This should be done at a minimum of 2-3 weeks ahead of an in-person or virtual meeting to ensure adequate time to get everything translated.
- *Actions:*
    - Plain talk all materials before sending them out for translation. Consider asking the translation team to do a review of the English document to ensure key points are translated simply and in a straightforward manner. When you get the translation back, it is always ideal to have it reviewed by another translator for errors.
    - If possible, do a cultural review of all materials before translation. This can be completed by someone within the agency or a community partner. If it's the latter, ensure that the community partner is compensated for their expertise.
- *Resources:*
    - Special subject estimates | Office of Financial Management (wa.gov)
    - Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services - Home (sharepoint.com)
    - Washington State Language Access Plan – Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
    - WA DOH Covid-19 Language Access Planning Tool

Accessibility for In-Person Events: Create an accessibility checklist for events.

- *Timing:* Create this checklist based on what was learned from the community survey you send out and have it prepared at least one week prior to the event to share with your team.

- *Actions:*
    - Based on the needs identified in your community survey, start brainstorming checklist items. It may be helpful to start by asking the following questions:
        - Is the event location well-marked using accessible signage (i.e. does it use plain talk, large text, graphics)? Are the signs large and visible for everyone to see?
        - Is the space ADA compliant? Are there wheelchair ramps and elevators?
        - Are restrooms easily accessible? Are restrooms single occupancy or gender neutral?
        - Is there enough room for everyone to sit?
        - Is the space well-lit? Is it quiet?
        - Is there adequate parking and/or is the space easily accessible by public transportation?
        - What are current requirements for prevention of the spread of COVID-19? Is there enough space for everyone to be comfortably socially distant, if needed?
    - In making the checklist, consider both potential outdoor and indoor accessibility needs.
    - The day of your meeting, plan to have members of the team greet community members as they arrive to make them feel welcome and identify and meet any additional access and functional needs.
- *Resources:*
    - Accessible Meetings, Events & Conferences Guide | ADA Hospitality (adaatyourservice.org)
    - Meetings and Events | Washington State Department of Health

Power Sharing:

- *Timing:* Ongoing throughout planning process and community meetings.
- *Actions:*
    - Acknowledge community concerns - listen and affirm understanding.
    - Check biases.
    - Co-develop questions and agenda (i.e. for feedback sessions).
    - Share space with communities through facilitation.
    - Understand community feedback may not always meet your or your agency's expectation.
    - Understand that it's OK to go off topic/agenda during meetings. Provide space for communities to raise concerns, share experiences.
    - Show respect.