

A Framework for Inclusive Community Engagement in Fairfax County

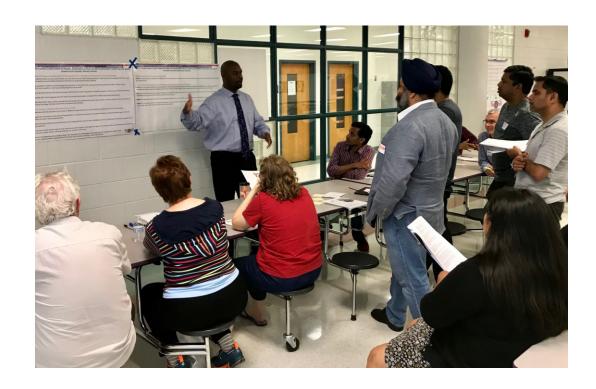
Lloyd Tucker, Director, Department of Neighborhood & Community Services

Karla Bruce, Chief Equity Officer, Office of the County Executive

Land Use Policy Committee September 28, 2021

Engagement in Fairfax County





Community engagement has always been an important hallmark and experience in Fairfax County.

Who Participates and Who Decides in Fairfax County?





Moving Away From:

Positions: People digging into narrow representations of what they want.



Moving Toward:

Values: People forging common ground and envisioning solutions that meet a variety of needs.

The Usual Suspects: Participants who represent a small segment of the total stakeholder community.



A Full Spectrum of Stakeholder Voices:

Ensuring a balanced understanding of community values, interests and concerns.

Argument: People seeking to get to get their individual way.



Dialog: People seeking to understand each other.

Buy-in People seeking to convince others to adopt their decision.



Real Input: Input which can be used to help shape decisions.

Events: People getting one shot at a decision.



Processes: Input integrated into decision-making and putting everyone on a shared learning curve.

Key Reasons to Enhance Engagement Efforts



Provide
historically
overlooked
voices a seat at
the table.

Amid a pandemic, government requires new engagement approaches.

Engagement is more than a survey; requires building long-term relationships.

Better outcomes for residents and stakeholders.

Greater ownership in community decisions.

What is Inclusive Community Engagement?

From One Fairfax Policy:

"To foster civil discourse and dialogue, community engagement shall ensure that the breadth of interests, ideas, and values of all people are heard and considered. Outreach and public participation processes will be inclusive of diverse races, cultures, ages and other social statuses.

Effective listening, transparency, flexibility and adaptability will be utilized to overcome barriers that prevent or limit participation in public processes."

Engage Fairfax

Engage Fairfax is the reimagined look at community engagement. Inclusive, equitable and authentic engagement align with and support One Fairfax and the Strategic Plan.

One Fairfax

One Fairfax racial and social equity policy commits the county to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services. Engagement is at the heart of achieving that vision.



Strategic Plan

The Countywide Strategic Plan will guide Fairfax County over the next decade and more. The choices and decisions made need to be infused with equitable community engagement practices.

Benefits of a Consistent Approach to Engagement



Framework provides a direction for improving our current community engagement practices. It enables departments to continue effective strategies while integrating inclusive community engagement concepts to expand and deepen participation.

Ensures stakeholders have fair and equal access regardless of the host department.

Raises awareness and collaboration among departments so we avoid duplicative or dueling engagement – more coordination.

Supports engagement through countywide, centralized functions to provide guidance, tools, networks, data analysis and more capacity.

DRAFT Core Principles of Fairfax County Engagement



- **1. PRIORITIZE EQUITY** In prioritizing equity, it is critical that we acknowledge intentional and unintentional inequities as we move toward a more inclusive engagement process.
- **2. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN TRUST** Work with communities in an honest and transparent manner, considering and respecting history, culture and trauma.
- **3. DEVELOP DATA-DRIVEN PROCESSES** Equip staff and residents to utilize data to inform all aspects of the engagement process.
- **4. ESTABLISH CLEAR EXPECTATIONS** Develop clear and transparent processes to achieve expected outcomes for the community. Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities.
- **5. ENABLE ENGAGED COMMUNICATIONS** Communicate clearly and openly for meaningful public input, broad community participation, and engagement in the decision-making process.
- **6. PROMOTE AND CREATE ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT** Collaborate with the community to ensure public engagement processes are broadly accessible to all members of the public to promote meaningful participation.



Fairfax County Community Engagement Spectrum

CORE PRINCIPLES:

Equitable

Trusted

Data-Driven

Meaningful

Transparent

Accessible

Engage

The county's commitment to the community is to be clear about the level of engagement expected for decisions.

Various relationships, capacity building, community outreach, communications and marketing happen constantly and concurrently to support the engagement levels noted to the right.

Engagement Level

Understand

Contribute

Collaborate

Decide

Community Role

Listen and ask questions to comprehend and grasp significance.

Share concerns and aspirations, and consider the concerns and aspirations expressed by others.

Partner with the county in the development of alternatives and the identification of preferred solutions.

Accept trust of county and community to respect and represent their interests in the decision-making process.

Fairfax County Role

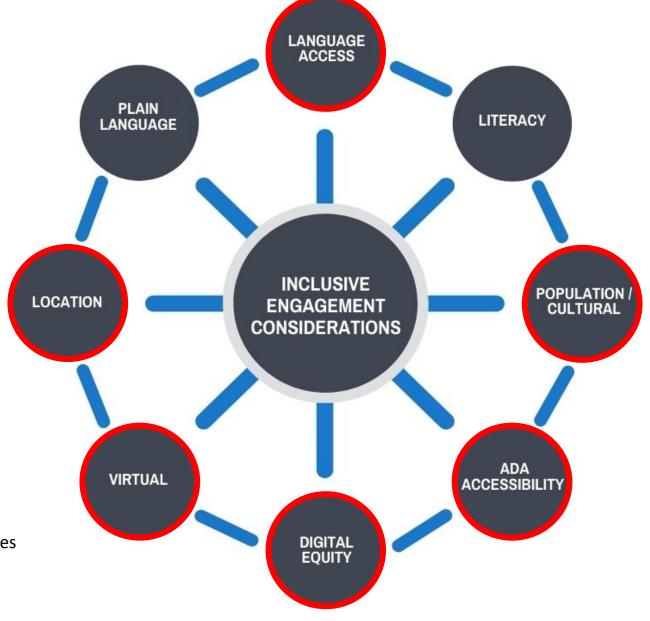
Provide the community with balanced, objective information.

Listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations expressed by community and ensure they are considered.

Look to the community in the formulation of solutions and incorporate into decision making to the maximum extent possible.

Strategically delegate decision-making as appropriate, such as with the BACs.

What Makes Engagement "Inclusive"





= Will require additional infrastructure and resources

Next Steps



- ✓ Develop implementation plan, including measuring impact.
- **✓** Budget requests for centralized engagement support, including:
 - ✓ Robust countywide online engagement platform (Parks and DPD have been piloting)
 - ✓ Expanded language access support
- **✓** Continue building engagement culture, including:
 - ✓ Pilot framework for the Strategic Plan, Mount Vernon Athletic Club, etc.
 - ✓ Department Equity Impact Plans include engagement goals/strategies
 - ✓ Develop countywide training
 - ✓ Leverage GIS and other tools
- ✓ Continue to listen, refine and adapt framework and approach.

