



# **04/ Public Engagement Toolkit**

# Public Engagement Toolkit

The toolkit in this document consists of engagement tools organized so as to help project leaders select appropriate tools based on what they are trying to achieve through the engagement. When choosing tools, it is important to consider the context (geography), audience, and desired outcomes. The toolkit is organized by the format of the engagement technique, and it is denoted for each tool the levels on Public Engagement Spectrum it can help achieve, as most tools can fit under multiple levels on the Public Engagement Spectrum.

Here, you can see an overview of the engagement tools organized by the format of the engagement technique, including: (1) Sharing Information, (2) Collecting & Compiling Input, and (3) Bringing People Together. Each tool is further elaborated on the following pages.

Following this overview table, each tool is called out on a page below with a description, list of resources needed, and relevant examples. The tools are organized by their level on the Public Engagement Spectrum, also shown at the top of each page with the following table:

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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	#	Tool	Description
Sharing Information	1	Fairs and Events	Host an information stand or session at community events to showcase plans or present designs.
	2	Newsletters	Inform and remind subscribers of relevant events, and offer follow-up opportunities.
	3	Website and/or Blog	Publish information and blogs including event descriptions, photos, comments from attendees, and future events.
	4	Social Media	Announce events and provide prompt feedback; attract new and hard to reach audiences using online tools.
	5	Advertising Products	Use tools like stickers and coasters to broadcast and remind of community events in a fun way.
	6	Office Hours/ Coffee Hour	Set up shop near stakeholders to offer regular in-person updates and discussions.
	7	Briefings	Build trust and interest by giving informative presentations to the media and organized groups.
	8	Information Kiosks	Increase awareness and provide the general public with easy-to-access information
	9	Responsiveness Summaries	Show how public comments have been addressed by consolidating feedback into a report and sharing them online.
Compiling Input	10	Surveys	Conduct questionnaires in person or through online tools to gather additional feedback.
	11	One-on-One Meetings	Meet with residents individually or in small groups to facilitate more natural and informal conversation.
	12	Comment Forms	Allow people, especially those who are less vocal, to provide comments and views individually.
	13	Scientific Surveys & Questionnaires	Administer surveys and questionnaires to obtain quantitative results about a larger population.
Bringing People Together	14	Open House	Engage stakeholders and confirm ideas, sometimes as a follow-up to more detailed engagements.
	15	Summits	Bring together a panel of experts from other areas to discuss relevant issues and stimulate dialogue.
	16	Storytelling Workshop	Learn about historical memories directly from residents through firsthand images and lived experiences.
	17	Community Walkshop	Create an interactive way for participants to share stories and identify challenges and opportunities.
	18	Problem Tree Analysis	Identify central problems, causes, influences, impacts, and how these problems relate to the project.
	19	Pop-Up Exercise	Use an idea comment poster, graffiti board, or picture tool to seek open-ended input and let comments be visible to others.
	20	Community Mapping	Use maps as a geographic reference for comments about current situations and opportunities.
	21	Visual Preference Survey	Have participants vote, perhaps electronically, on images to get feedback on visual preferences.

Bringing People Together (continued)

#	Tool	Description
22	Focus Group	Assemble stakeholders based on interest topics to regularly provide feedback and shape the project.
23	Collage Scenarios / Dot Activity	Groups prioritize ideas using icon or dot stickers on maps or images to suggest design options and preferences.
24	Visioning Exercises	Work with residents to identify visions, goals and aspirations for a topic or geography relevant to a project.
25	Meeting-in-a-Box	Provide communities an accessible activity in a shoebox for them to facilitate independent meetings.
26	Demonstration Projects	Use temporary installations and tactical urbanism to test ideas or demonstrate potential conditions.
27	Charrette	Facilitate discussion and a series of hands-on working sessions in small groups about design proposals.
28	Facilitator / Advocacy Training	Offer trainings that empower and educate residents to participate in government planning processes.
29	Stakeholder Mapping	Identify partnership opportunities and build more informed interviews and stakeholder outreach.
30	Participatory Budget Making	Enable community members to work with government staff to make budget decisions democratically.
31	Action Teams	Teams of experts, residents, and leaders discuss certain topics, provide ideas, and identify implementers.
32	Community Meetings	Organize community meetings to give people the opportunity to publicly vocalize their opinions.
33	Public Hearings	Hold public hearings to address questions and comments, sometimes to an appointed/technical board, and to meet legal requirements.
34	Revolving Conversations	Foster open and meaningful discussion through a self-facilitated conversation.
35	Card Storming	Identify all perspectives on a topic by organizing ideas and issues into natural groupings.
36	Workshops	Encourage participants to learn and provide input by working together on defined assignments.
37	Focused Conversations	Explore challenging situations or issues by having structures discussions with attendees.
38	World Cafe	Bring people together in simultaneous rounds of conversation through a cafe-style setting.
39	Open Space Meetings	Enable people to create and design their own agenda through self-directed meetings.
40	Appreciative Inquiry Process	Focus on best practices and how to build on existing positive aspects to co-create a vision for the future.
41	Deliberative Forums	Discover where there is common ground for action on contentious issues where there is no "right" answer.
42	Advisory Groups	Assemble a group of stakeholders on a regular basis over a designated period of time to produce recommendations to a decision-maker.

# Techniques for Sharing Information

## How do we share information?

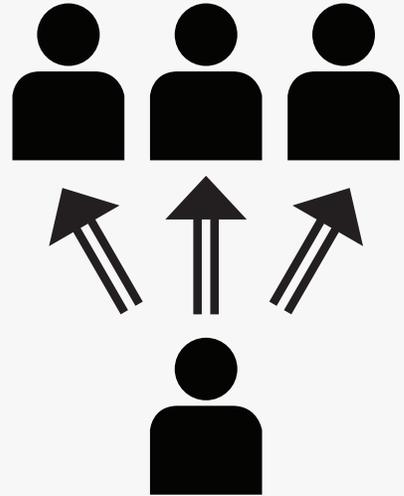
Techniques for sharing information generally are either part of an awareness campaign or part of an information/education program. They may also be used as mechanisms to report on public comments received.

**Awareness campaigns** are typically conducted in conjunction with a participatory process; their purpose is to make people aware of the opportunity to learn more or be involved. For example, a community initiating a long-range planning process might first conduct an awareness campaign to alert people to the upcoming decision.

**An information/education program** is designed to educate people on a particular topic. One example is a national campaign to inform people about an upcoming effort to update flood zone maps before a series of meetings and solicitation of comments on proposed changes to those maps. An information program may be focused on the INFORM level of the Public Engagement Spectrum or it may support another level of engagement.

**Why is the distinction important?** Techniques for awareness campaigns, such as bill-stuffers and advertisements, are geared for getting peoples' attention. They convey relatively little information. Techniques for information/education programs are focused on conveying information and need to be sensitive to the level of complexity of the information as well as how the recipient will receive the information.

**Feedback mechanisms** are ways to share with stakeholders the comments you have received and how stakeholder input and comments have been addressed to date.



**Awareness campaigns:**  
information kiosks, fairs and events

**Information/education programs:** office hours/coffee hours, websites, social media, briefings

**Feedback mechanisms:**  
responsiveness summaries, progress reports, newsletters, and direct mail

## Tool 1: Fairs & Events

Sometimes planning staff will be able to collaborate with community groups or other City departments and take advantage of existing community events or meetings to share information about upcoming planning projects.

Existing community events can be an effective way to disseminate information to a broader audience and allow planners to capture ideas of residents who may not normally participate through other conventional public involvement activities. Another advantage of piggybacking on community events is that it requires less effort on the part of planning staff related to logistic preparation of the event.

### Resources Needed

- Boards with introduction and illustrations for plans
- Fliers to hand out to event attendees
- Staff to present at stands or meetings

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 2: Newsletters

Send out newsletters before engagement events to inform subscribers and remind them as the event approaches. Individuals can subscribe to newsletters to give you access to a broader audience. Follow up with subscribers after events with highlights and main takeaways. While this process will require staff time dedicated to writing and designing the newsletter, it will allow the Project manager to keep individuals posted with calendar invites, and loop in subscribers to things happening in the community to educate them on the opportunities for getting involved in their community and making an impact.

### Resources Needed

- Build a network of subscribers
- Graphic design of the newsletter for a pleasant reading experience
- Camera to take photos of events
- Staff to gather photos, quotes, comments, etc. from participants, and write short articles

### Tool 3: Website/Blog

Creating a blog or a website where planning staff can write and publish posts with project updates. The updates should include general descriptions of events, photos, comments/quotes from attendees, visions for the future, etc. As the blog is available on the internet, it can be shared with the general public in the City and beyond.

Blogs can help keep the community updated on the progress of projects in a format that they can access at almost any time and from anywhere. They document events with descriptions and photos to let the general public know about what has happened. Blogs can also serve as a way to follow-up with the attendees of events to confirm the highlights and key takeaways from the events. Given the public accessibility of the blog, planning staff in both Pittsburgh and other cities can use it as a reference for future projects.

#### Resources Needed

- Graphic design of the website for a pleasant reading experience
- Camera to take photos of event
- Staff to gather photos, quotes, comments, etc. from participants

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### Tool 4: Social Media

Use iconic images or descriptions of events on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter in the days before an event or at an event. This will attract people to engage and showcase happenings to people who are not able to attend the engagement. Using social media will allow the Project Manager to announce events and provide prompt feedback for events due to the fast and accessible nature of social media platforms. Additionally, establishing a presence online will increase awareness of planning processes and associated opportunities for engagement.

#### Resources Needed

- Build a network of followers on the various social media platforms
- Camera and ability to edit photos and text on social media
- Mobile devices to live stream events on Instagram or Facebook

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## Tool 5: Advertising Products

Distribute tools such as stickers, coasters, and vinyl cutout signs in public gathering places with event information to advertise community events in a fun way. These tools broadcast community events and serve as easy reminders to the public of meeting times.

### Resources Needed

- Graphic designs for stickers, coasters, or other advertising products
- Budget to manufacture the products
- Staff time or trusted partners to distribute the products

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### Tool 6: Office Hours/Coffee Hour

The purpose of office hours and coffee hours is to bring planner and project managers to the people and provide opportunities for the public to engage with planners and project managers, one-on-one or in small, informal groups, on issues that affect the City or the project at hand and specific concerns they may have about development and policy in the City.

The format for this is simple. You can bring a tent, a table, some planning materials, and a couple planners and set up in a park, rec center, or at a special event like a farmer's market or festival. Alternatively, one or two planners or Project Managers could advertise that they will be at a specific coffee shop, library or community space and that anyone who wants to can come and ask them questions.

#### Resources Needed

- Space to sit for a couple hours (either bring a tent/table, or ask a coffee shop or library if you can sit for a while and answer questions)
- Planning and project materials for reference and advertising
- Comment cards, pens, paper, and business cards

## Tool 7: Briefings

Briefings are a great tool to use in the preliminary stages of the process. These presentations provide information to the media or organized groups while raising awareness and interest in participation. Presenters can address any questions or concerns that the audience may have as well as identify individuals for subsequent interviews. Be sure to know your audience beforehand.

### Resources Needed

- Staff or trusted partners trained to present and answer questions
- Space to hold briefings
- Projector screens, computers, or other technology to display presentations
- Informative handouts

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## Tool 8: Information Kiosks

When the general public shows high interest in the project, information kiosks are a helpful way to provide easy-to-access information and generate additional awareness. You may use computers or tablets in these kiosks, which can be linked to the project website. Additionally, users can pick up informative materials and submit input. These stations can be permanent or used temporarily, and are best located in high-traffic pedestrian areas.

If using a computer or table in your kiosk, ensure that the equipment cannot “walk away” from the station and regularly check that it is in working order. Also, be sure that any distributive materials are restocked and content is updated.

### Resources Needed

- Kiosks or information stations
- Equipment and information materials
- Staff to check that equipment is in working order and restock any materials

## Tool 9: Responsiveness Summaries

To maintain transparency throughout the process, it is important to publicly and openly show how public comments have been addressed. In some cases, this is legally required. Summarize the feedback to comments in a well-organized report that includes how each comment will be incorporated into the decision-making process. You may also consider including key words or issues related to each comment so that people can conveniently search for them within the summary.

### Resources Needed

- Public comments
- Report summary
- Staff to distribute summary

# Techniques for Collecting & Compiling Input

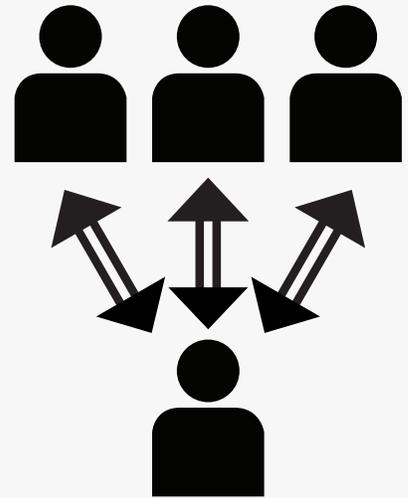
How might you collect input from individuals or from groups of people? How will you summarize this data and share it with those who are interested?

This section presents various techniques for collecting and compiling input from the public. Some of the techniques are conducted on paper or through electronic methods, while others are conducted in person. The techniques also vary in who is providing input. For some techniques, respondents self-select, while for other techniques, a representative sample is polled or a pre-selected group is contacted.

With **individual inquiries**, the individual responds to an in-person questionnaire or online interview request or survey. Alternatively, this might occur during, before, or after a meeting. Results are summarized to present the views of those who respond.

In **social science research**, individuals respond to a survey instrument or participate in a focus group. Results are generalized for a larger population. A survey should be designed to gather data from a statistically valid representation of the larger population. Focus groups, by contrast, give an indication of what a similar group might believe, but the results are not statistically valid for the larger population.

**Voting** is the most basic form of participation in democracy. A referendum, where citizens vote on a specific proposal, is an example of a voting technique.



**Individual Inquiries:** comment forms, interviews, social media

**Social science research:** scientific surveys, questionnaires

**Voting**

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## Tool 10: Surveys

Conduct questionnaires in person or through online tools to gather additional feedback.

### Resources Needed

- Questions
- Online platform for creation and distribution of survey, or capacity for in person distribution
- Method for organizing and presenting responses

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 11: One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings can serve to allow planners or Project Managers to meet with residents individually or in small groups to facilitate more natural and informal conversation. Similar to coffee hours or office hours, one-on-one meetings are set up ahead of time with specific stakeholders to gather input, feedback and ideas. While one-on-one meetings do not have the same opportunity for transparency as others, they are a necessary component of engagement processes as they allow planners and Project Managers to meet people where they are and make engagement as easy as possible.

### Resources Needed

- Meeting location
- Planning and project materials for reference and advertising
- Business cards, note-taking materials

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## Tool 12: Comment Forms

Comment forms allow people, particularly less vocal participants, to provide individual feedback about the proposed project or process. It is critical to tailor the form to the project's public engagement objectives while soliciting other information that can be used throughout the decision-making process, and not simply ask questions specific to the project. These forms can be completed and returned to staff in person or completed online. You may consider including a space on the form for participants to provide their contact information if they would like to receive updates about the project. Although insightful, the results of these forms are not representative of a larger population. Be mindful not to characterize public opinions solely from these comment forms.

### Resources Needed

- Comment forms
- Staff to distribute comment forms

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## Tool 13: Scientific Surveys & Questionnaires

When you would like to learn about the opinions and preferences of a larger group, scientific surveys and questionnaires are a great tool to obtain this information. By attaining quantitative and statistically valid results, you can better understand a group as a whole or compare among various groups. Bear in mind that this tool is best used when there is no need to develop relationships or for stakeholders to interact with each other. Additionally, the objectives for the data should be established. Determine how you will utilize the results of the surveys and questionnaires beforehand.

You may administer these surveys and questionnaires in person, through the mail, over the phone, or online. Since there are potential biases, including sample bias and response bias, have a professional design and conduct the surveys, if possible. Poorly designed questions can lead to biases, so test the questions to ensure that they are not biased or leading. Close-ended, fixed-response questions work better than open-ended questions.

### Resources Needed

- Surveys and questionnaires
- Staff or trained surveyors to administer or mail and collect surveys
- Call center for telephone-conducted surveys
- Working website for online surveys



# Techniques Bringing People Together

How might you bring people together to inform them about a topic?

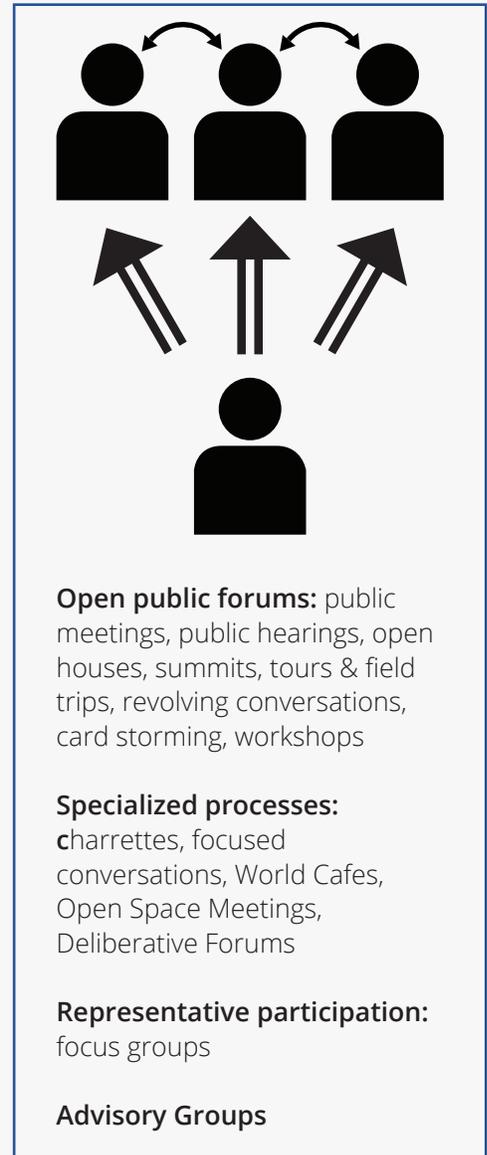
**Open public forums** are events of various designs generally open to anyone. These might include Open Houses, Workshops, Public Meetings and Public Hearings. Less common tools include Revolving Conversations, Tours/Field Trips, and Summits.

**Specialized processes** are those with multiple steps that include a specific methodology. Examples include Open Space Meetings, World Cafes, Deliberative Forums, and Charrettes.

Note that some of these methodologies were developed by an individual or organization and appropriate credit should always be given when used.

**Representative participation** occurs when a sample of the population is engaged to represent the larger public. Focus Groups are a type of representative participation technique that typically involve a small group of citizens selected at random, but the results cannot be generalized.

**Advisory groups** are selected small groups that meet over a period of time for the purpose of achieving specific objectives. Advisory Groups are distinguished from stakeholder meetings in that the intent is for the group to meet several times to accomplish a specified objective. The membership of an Advisory Group is typically selected to include representatives of different perspectives, interests or organizations, but the members are not typically selected at random. There are many variations of Advisory Groups, including task forces and working groups.



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## Tool 14: Open House

An open house engages stakeholders and informs ideas, sometimes as a follow-up to more detailed engagements such as charrettes. A follow-up open house can include turning drawings into renderings and presenting to the general public.

This tool allows for planning staff to engage stakeholders from the charrette and provide information to community members who were not able to attend previous meetings, or who are not able to commit two full hours for a regular public meeting but might be able to drop in on an Open House for 15-30 minutes. Open houses can also provide an opportunity to confirm what you heard with the attendees at the previous engagement events.

### Resources Needed

- Documentations of the engagement activity
- Transcriptions of the designs at the charrette; e.g. rendering digital models out of the sketches that were done at the charrette
- Handouts of the design ideas
- Presentation boards

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### Tool 15: Summits

Summits are an opportunity to bring a panel of experts from other cities and areas to discuss planning issues/topics together with residents and professionals from the City.

They are a good opportunity to educate the general public about planning issues and topics. Summits also encourage conversations with broader attendees from different fields in the City. They also enable professionals to have a dialogue with the general public directly.

#### Resources Needed

- A large venue to host the summit that has:
- Good accessibility (ADA compliant, close to transit, available parking, etc.)
- On-site childcare
- Presentations or keynote talks

## Tool 16: Storytelling Workshop

During a Storytelling Workshop, community members bring photos and share stories about significant places and/or activities that they participate(d) in the neighborhood during their daily lives. Photos are scanned into the photo library during the event, to be used as historical artifacts for the neighborhood.

These workshops allow planners to learn about historical moments directly from the residents through first-hand accounts and for residents to share their visions of the community. The memories can provide important context and be used in the plan when discussing the history of the community. Artifacts collected can also inform art projects.

### Resources Needed

- Camera to capture images of items or creations
- Audio recorder to capture stories
- Pens & paper at tables for recording key notes

### Highlighted Technique: Place It!

Place It! (c) is a design- and participation-based urban planning method that uses innovative model-building workshops to bring people from a variety of backgrounds into a design conversation.

1. Place a collection of random objects on a table (children's play items, office supplies, construction paper, holiday decorations, etc.). The Pittsburgh Department of City Planning also has a small number of supply boxes available for this tool.
2. Ask participants to use the objects to create their favorite memory of a City, place, or topic. Re-word this prompt to best fit your project, keeping in mind that this should be about telling and sharing stories.
3. Have participants tell their neighbors about what story they built and what made it such a great memory. If time allows, have small groups report out to the greater room on their discussion and any key elements they all associated positively.

You can always add another prompt if time allows. This is a great activity to when you have participants who feel their voices have not been heard, if there are multiple languages spoken, or if there are varying levels of project expertise.

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### Tool 17 Community Walkshops

Participants identify the elements of their community that they like, as well as challenges and opportunities while walking with a guide, a map, and a camera. Walkshops create an informal and interactive ways for participants to share stories. They can be based on selected themes, such as natural environment, open space, and transportation.

Walkshops allow planning staff to engage people more deeply in their communities and learn about how people view the communities through their own eyes.

#### Resources Needed

- Reasonable sized and selected area for walkshops
- Guidance for participants to pay attention to certain elements
- Maps
- Camera

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## Tool 18: Problem Tree Analysis

Problem tree analyses allow participants to identify main problems including with their causes, what influences the problems, and their effects through visualization and mapping. It shares many similarities with mind mapping. This tool can allow participants to break down large problems into more manageable issues/tasks.

Problem tree analyses can promote shared understanding of the problems the plan should address and provide a mechanism for prioritizing how the overall problem will be addressed. Planning staff can use this tool for co-creation of solutions/strategies.

### Resources Needed

- Large wall or sheet of paper
- Sticky Notes
- Categories for problems to help organize the activity

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### Tool 19: Pop-Up Exercise

This practice can vary from a graffiti wall that is in place over a long period of time, to an interesting map set up in a public space with comment cards, to a one-off event that would draw people to comment and share pictures on social media. The idea is to provide an open-ended prompt, seek input, and make that input visible for a period of time for others to see and interact with.

This is a fun and engaging way to reach community members, and it can be designed to be complicated or easy to create. Pop up exercises engage people informally on topics relevant to their neighborhood or City, and create a feedback loop by allowing community members to interact with each other and view each other’s comments.

#### Resources Needed

- Question(s) to be asked of the public
- Posters, boards, walls, chalkboards, artwork, etc. to write/stick ideas on and associate writing materials

## Tool 20: Community Mapping

Use maps and photographs of an area of specific location to illustrate how people view their area, what they like or dislike and improvements they would like to see implemented. Ideas generated in small group discussions are recorded on sticky notes or pre-prepared cards. Discussions are facilitated to help explore issues, build consensus or identify areas of conflict. Specific challenges can be posed that groups have to wrestle with, such as where should a building be placed, the size and shape of buildings and the location of basic amenities and those less desired (ex. Waste facilities, substations, industry). Community mapping can be an effective approach to engaging people of all ages and interests.

There are two common approaches to community mapping activities:

1. Create a large map that can be laid on the floor or on a table so people can engage in a fun and interactive way, by walking on or around it and marking elements or placing icons on it.
2. Guided walks of the area to develop visual photographs of things people like and those they want addressed that can be brought back and used in the mapping exercise.

Using either approach, the goal of community mapping is to understand challenges and opportunities that communities face and parse out preferences for future development.

### Resources Needed

- Maps
- Photos
- Sticky Notes and Pens
- Icons for identifying various ideas or places, like colored dot stickers

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### Tool 21: Visual Preference Survey

Present participants a selection of preference or alternative images. These can be physical options with handwritten comments, or you can use clickers or apps on cell phones to get feedback. For example, Slido can provide real-time survey results. The goal of this engagement is to understand challenges and opportunities that the community faces and preferences for future developments.

#### Resources Needed

- Preference images tailored to the community
- Voting method
- Results analysis capability

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## Tool 22: Focus Group

Focus groups allow groups of stakeholders to assemble based on interests, such as housing, development, transportation, etc. Focus groups meet periodically (sometimes only once) with planners and Project Managers to provide detailed and focused feedback to proposals. Focus groups can also gather a representative group of a certain population within the project geography for the purpose of asking general or values based questions to understand the different values of the diversity of residents and interests. Usually, an incentive is offered at focus group meetings in order to encourage attendance, as you might be looking to hear from individuals without the time or resources to attend all project meetings or be involved in the Steering Committee or Action Teams.

Focus groups allow planners and Project Managers to receive concentrated feedback efficiently from stakeholders who are familiar with issues and impacted by potential project outcomes. They provide an opportunity for stakeholders to influence plans through the planning process and community directly with planners or Project Managers.

### Resources Needed

- Community initiative or consultant to organize focus group and bring in planners and consultants
- Clear questions and goals for the focus group attendees
- Food or other incentive for attending

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## Tool 23: Collage Scenarios / Dot Activity

Participants are broken out into groups (this can also be accomplished in an Open House style event). Each group will prioritize ideas using icon or dot stickers on maps or images to suggest design options, preferences and/or priorities.

In a collage scenario, participants put activity icon stickers on a map, indicating activities such as biking, walking, driving, and parking. This allows the Project Manager to figure out how much space is needed for each activity and prioritize and organize different modes of transportation, or another activity type. This tool empowers residents through participation to suggest design elements and understand the design process and tradeoffs.

In a dot activity, individuals place dots or pins to vote for elements they do or do not want to experience in their neighborhood. The voting board can be simply a collection of reference images or activity names. Additional layers can be added to this engagement to indicate priority levels, or others. This tool allows the Project Manager to learn from residents' preferences to build a final design and prioritize implementation items.

### Resources Needed

- Maps, graphics of programming options and prioritizing preferences that people can choose between
- Sticky Notes and Pens, icons for identifying various ideas or places, like colored dot stickers

## Tool 24: Visioning Exercises

Visioning generates common goals, hope and encouragement, and gives people a sense of what a project can accomplish. Instead of starting with problem solving, the identification of something negative to move away from, which can become fixated in technical details and political problems and other disagreements, beginning with visioning gives participants the opportunity to identify something positive to move towards.

Visioning exercises should work with residents to identify visions, goals and aspirations for a topic or geography relevant to a project, but there are many different ways to achieve this end.

### Highlighted Technique: Vision Flashcards

1. Consider generating a list of 20-40 key words related to the vision or values for a project. You might collect these words from past surveys or interactions with the public on the same topic. Put each word on a different flash card.
2. Separate participants into small groups, each with a full set of flashcards. Ask each group to go through the words and choose all they identify with the success of the project. Then have the groups assemble all the chosen words into 3-5 categories.
3. Finally, the groups should write a vision or value statement for each category and report back on their process to the group.



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## Tool 25: Meeting-in-a-Box

A meeting-in-a-box is a tool designed to allow community groups, neighborhood associations, and friends to meet at a time that is convenient for them in order to provide feedback. All of the materials that are needed are kept in a literal box that community members can acquire from planning staff and return once they have completed it.

A meeting-in-a-box allows for the opportunity to reach out to more residents in a more direct way. Since the meetings are conducted by community members, rather than the City, it is an effective way to collect ideas and opinions from residents who are unlikely to attend public meetings and whose voices are unlikely heard at community events. The boxes can be designed to fit the specific needs of the project.

### Resources Needed

- Boxes (about the size of a shoe box)
- Meeting-in-a-Box Guide for meeting leaders
- Materials to complete meeting activity (Potential Needs: pens, pencils, sticky notes, City of Pittsburgh maps, visioning images, etc.)
- Report forms

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## Tool 26: Demonstration Projects

Demonstration projects are temporary installations that are useful for testing ideas or demonstrating the potential of a changed condition.

These projects can help raise awareness for the planning process and provide an opportunity to obtain feedback from the public for potential interventions in expressive ways.

### Resources Needed

- Pop-up event stands
- Art installations to represent potential designs
- Volunteers from the community
- Fliers to advertise the projects/events
- Staff to facilitate the project

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### Tool 27: Charrette

A charrette starts with an orientation presentation, followed by discussions and a series of hands-on working sessions in small groups about design proposals. At the end of the charrette, every group reports back and discuss together.

A charrette allows for broader community input on a design proposal. Planning staff can use the comments from the charrette activity to form a key set of parameters to inform future steps. A charrette can also serve as an opportunity to educate attendees about the different issues that the project must resolve.

#### Resources Needed

- A venue centrally located near project area
- Materials to complete meeting activity (Potential Needs: pens, pencils, sticky notes, City of Pittsburgh maps, visioning images, etc.)
- Staff/facilitators to run smaller group discussions
- Food or other incentive for attending

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 28: Facilitator / Advocacy Training

Advocacy training serves to empower community members to participate in government planning processes by offering training on decision-making processes, providing opportunities to speak out, and encouraging equal conversations. While often termed “advocacy training”, a large component of this is training in public speaking and facilitation to empower residents to advocate for themselves.

Many are nervous or unprepared to speak in front of City and county councils at public hearings and meetings. This process is even more difficult for those from communities not traditionally engaged in the planning process, those with language barriers, and those with distrust of government or with past experiences of discrimination. This process is also new to many immigrants, as publicly opposing government may not be allowed or common in their home country. In this way, it is important to provide training directly or to provide funding to community organizations that can provide training in topics such as:

- Civics 101
- How to facilitate group discussions
- Understanding the project planning process
- How to testify in front of City council or planning commission
- Telling your story in two minutes

While an online webinar or downloadable video can suffice, an in-person training that includes role-playing is ideal for maximum impact.

### Resources Needed

- Training workshops
- Facilitators

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Tool 29: Stakeholder Mapping

This tool provides an opportunity for community members to create a relationship diagram of stakeholder groups involved in their community. These maps should connect different stakeholder groups by the services, capital, or goods that are transacted or interactions between the groups.

Stakeholder maps can be used as a tool to inform later interviews and other stakeholder outreach. They can also be used to identify partnerships across different sectors/interest groups and potential connections that don't currently exist.

#### Resources Needed

- Example of mapping stakeholder relationships as a warm-up instruction
- Paper, pens, pencils, sticky notes

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 30: Participatory Budget Making

Participatory budgeting is a deliberative, democratic approach in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public or municipal budget. Participatory budgeting allows participants to identify, discuss and prioritize spending project, and gives them the ability to make real decisions and tradeoffs about how money is spent. These processes are typically designed to involve those left out of traditional methods of public engagement. Frameworks for participatory budgeting vary by scale, procedure and objective, and so the amount of money can be very different from one project to the next.

It is necessary to do a lot of preparation work for a participatory budgeting meeting in order to fully present and educate attendees about the money being discussed and the relevant limitations and tradeoffs associated with different choices. Typically, participatory budgeting happens across a series of meetings, preferably with regular attendance, but with smaller amounts of money one-off meetings can be accommodated.

### Resources Needed

- Flexible budget, decision on if the public will be given options for spending or a blank slate
- Develop a presentation on the money and represent any limitations or tradeoffs
- Facilitate meeting and potentially break out groups
- Diversity of attendees in terms of age, race, and type of stakeholder

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Tool 31: Action Teams

Teams of community residents, trusted community partners, and subject matter experts meet regularly to write and provide proposals for a project through discussions focused on thematic sub-topics under a pre-identified community vision. Action Teams should be formed as sub-committees of a Steering Committee to work together to create the policies, project and programs for the various components of a project. Each Action Team should be led by a member of the Steering Committee of a project with expertise in the chosen topic. This ensures that the work of Action Teams is directly linked to Steering Committee work. Staff from various public agencies should coordinate to attend and provide input at appropriate Action Team meetings.

In Neighborhood Plans, Actions Teams are required for every process, and consist of four sub-groups, including: Community, Development, Mobility, and Infrastructure.

#### Resources Needed

- Focused energy on specific topics
- Meeting space
- Meeting agendas and presentations as needed
- Note-taker
- Flip chart or whiteboard for discussion

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 32: Community Meetings

Community meetings are an effective tool to give people the opportunity to publicly ask questions and give comments. They also give attendees the chance to hear the same information and comments. Typically, staff members open the meeting with a presentation and then open the floor to the public for questions and comments.

Since community meetings are open to the public at large, preparation is key. Ensure that all staff and facilitators are well-trained and knowledgeable by reviewing all materials and components of the meeting beforehand. Set up the meeting to be as welcoming and receptive to public comments as possible. Allow attendees to vent their frustrations and concerns, but beware that public meetings can escalate out of control if emotions are high.

### Resources Needed

- Staff to conduct and facilitate public meetings
- Space to hold meetings
- Projector screens, microphones, etc.
- Sign-in sheets, pens, handouts, etc. for attendees

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Tool 33: Public Hearings

Similar to public meetings, public hearings allow people to publicly provide their views. Often times, public hearings are used to meet legal or regulatory requirements. Consequently, the notification process and structure of hearings are more formal. You must post an agenda at least 24 hours prior to the hearing and recordings or notes of the proceedings after. During the hearing, the public may comment during an allocated comment period. These comments must also be recorded.

#### Resources Needed

- Staff to conduct and facilitate public hearings
- Space to hold hearings
- Mailed notices, news releases, or other media to advertise hearings
- Agenda and website to post agenda in advance
- Staff to record hearings and take notes published afterward

## Tool 34: Revolving Conversations

Also called Samoan Circles or Conversation Circles, Revolving Conversations are an excellent tool to foster open and meaningful discussion of a topic, such as the vision or values related to the project. The premise involves a self-facilitated conversation that is carried out by an inner circle of four speakers that change over the course of the conversation. Revolving Conversations can be great icebreakers, particularly, in the beginning stages of the project. Since there is no leader or appointed facilitator, this tool can be great to use in a low-trust environment. Conversely, it is crucial that you or the convener clarifies that the participants, as a group, controls the conversation and that they must not monopolize the circle.

The setup of the room is fundamental to a Revolving Conversation. Generally, you will need to form a small circle with four chairs, possibly around a table, for the speakers involved in the inner circle. Other participants may gather around the circle and form a line when they would like to join the conversation by replacing someone in the inner circle. Depending on the size of the room and attendance, microphones can be helpful as well. Though the conversation does not require a leader, you may consider recording it or taking notes on flip charts, which can be summarized and published later.

### Resources Needed

- Staff to set up room and document conversation
- Space to have conversations
- Chairs, table, microphones, etc. for speakers
- Sign-in sheets, pens, name tags, etc. for participants
- Flip charts, markers, computers, etc. to document conversation

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Tool 35: Card Storming

Card Storming is a brainstorming method that permits a large number of people to provide input about what is important to them about an issue, problem, or process. Working in small groups, participants identify these ideas on sticky notes or cards, accumulating between 20 to 35 in total. The participants then organize the notes into natural groupings and provide themes based on what is emerging. This tool maximizes engagement because the results are visual, audio, and kinesthetic. It also builds ownership and highlights inclusion by ensuring that no ideas are wasted.

#### Resources Needed

- Flipse charts, sticky notes, pens, markers, etc.
- Theme cards
- Staff to facilitate activity

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 36: Workshops

When you would like participants to provide input that can be used more directly in the decision-making process, workshops are suitable. They involve public forums in which participants work together in small groups to complete defined assignments and activities. Typically focused on a specific set of issues or discreet tasks, workshops encourage participants to learn through discovery and exchange with one another. Graphics, including maps, and other materials, such as sticky notes, can be helpful in aiding these collaborative efforts.

### Resources Needed

- Staff to facilitate workshop
- Space to hold workshop or public forum
- Projection screens, computers, etc.
- Flip charts, sticky notes, pens, markers, etc.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 37: Focused Conversations

Focused conversations are useful to explore certain situations or issues. Instrumental to public engagement, such dialogues with groups of participants can be rather insightful and meaningful. The questions that you prepare can be arranged in four stages that flow from surface to depth of the conversation: objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional. Objective questions review facts, reflective questions evoke emotional responses, interpretive questions draw out meanings, and decisional questions consider future actions. Though the questions you ask may target controversial topics, be sure to remain neutral and open-minded throughout the conversation.

### Resources Needed

- Staff to hold and document conversations
- Space to have conversations
- Prepared questions

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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## Tool 38: World Cafe

World cafés are a refreshing way to bring people together and foster open communication. They remove the formalities of traditional meetings and create atmospheres that are more commonplace and comfortable for participants. Participants may volunteer to stay at a table as a table host, or move to different tables around the room and mingle between rounds. As you design your world café, remember seven key principles: 1. Set the context; 2. Create a hospitable space; 3. Explore questions that matter; 4. Encourage contributions by everyone; 5. Connect diverse perspectives; 6. Listen together for patterns and insights; 7. Share collective discoveries.

As their name suggests, world cafés mimic a comfortable and informal café-style setting. Roundtables are ideal and should be set up randomly around the room. Aside from chairs for the tables, you may also consider using tablecloths, small centerpieces, and refreshments to enhance the café atmosphere.

### Resources Needed

- Staff to facilitate cafes
- Space for cafe
- Prepared questions and directions
- Chairs, tables, tablecloths, etc.
- Refreshments
- Flip charts, paper, sticky notes, pens, etc.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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### Tool 39: Open Space Meetings

To address issues and concerns of a large group, open space meetings are beneficial by giving participants control of how they want to participate and what they want to discuss. To begin, all participants start in the same room with seats arranged in a circle. On the wall, a blank matrix lists available meeting places on one axis and times on the other. After the convener reviews the central theme of the meeting and describe the Open Space process, they can introduce the four fundamental principles: 1. Whoever comes are the right people; 2. Whenever it starts is the right time; 3. When it's over, it's over; 4. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen. They can also introduce the Law of Two Feet: If you are in a situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, it is your right and responsibility to go elsewhere. Though these meetings can be as short as half a day, they typically last 1 to 3 days, so plan for refreshments and materials accordingly.

#### Resources Needed

- Staff to convene and document meetings
- Space to have meetings
- Flip charts, pens, computers, etc.
- Refreshments/snacks for all-day or multiple sessions

## Tool 40: Appreciative Inquiry Process

This process places the focus of the discussion almost exclusively on positive elements and attributes, rather than challenges that the project or system faces. They are based on selecting topics for the inquiry, interviews with individuals throughout the system, and identification of themes that represent the community's idea of an ideal future. The process typically takes multiple months and includes four phases:

- Discovery: to appreciate what is
- Dream: to imagine what might be
- Design: to determine what should be
- Destiny: to create what will be

The Discovery phase is used to prepare for interviews and train those who will be conducting the interviews on the best practices related to this method. During this phase a map of the "positive core" should be created. The Dream phase allows for reflection on the key questions the process aims to address and to clarify and document the dream through an organization dream map. The Design phase is when design options are formulated for enacting the community's dream. The Destiny phase is the final phase and includes a review of the entire process, publication and celebration of process accomplishments, and development of a list of potential next steps to move towards the community's ideal future.

An Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Summit held over 1-6 days could help condense a process timeline by accomplishing all four steps within the timeframe. This summit would be an opportunity for the entire "system" to be present and participate in the experience. Extensive preparation is required accomplish all four stages in such a short timeframe.

### Resources Needed

- Space to hold the meeting(s)
- Staff to facilitate, coordinate logistics (6-10 depending on size of group), and take notes (1 staff person for each 25 attendees at least)
- Projector, microphone, laptop computers, printers, digital camera, etc.
- Flip charts, pens, markers, etc.
- Refreshments for all day or multiple sessions

## Tool 41: Deliberative Forums

This type of forum is most useful to address complex issues that do not have a “right” answer. What separates this type of forum is that the organizers prepare and share a discussion guide ahead of time that includes approaches to solving the problem. This guide is distributed ahead of time and frames the deliberations that occur at the forum.

Organizers should work to make sure a diverse set of opinions are represented by attendees. The forum begins with a welcome from the convener and/or moderator, followed by introductions at smaller table groups. Attendees should share how they are personally related to/impacted by the issue. Only after introductions are completed should the deliberation begin, guided by the moderator. At the end of the forum, all attendees will be asked to reflect on what they learned.

### Resources Needed

- Staff, including a convener, moderator, and recorder
- Space that includes open seating arranged in a “U” (for small groups) or circle shape
- Flip charts, markers, masking tape, name tags, etc.
- Discussion guides to frame the issue for deliberation
- Exit surveys that allow for feedback and comments

### Highlighted Technique: Deliberative Democracy

Championed by The Art of Democracy and Carnegie Mellon University’s Program for Deliberative Democracy, this is an innovative way to engage difference as a resource by seeking to develop informed opinions about a topic as a way to provide consultation on action items.

This type of forum works well for larger groups, upwards of 50-70 people, as participants are broken into tables of 6-8 participants. After introductions by the moderator and convener, table participants are asked to introduce themselves and then move through the topics in an ordered way (facilitated by a “moderator guide”). Each table will be asked to come to a consensus on two questions to be asked of a resource panel (stakeholders and decision-makers). Tables ask their questions of the panel. At the end of the forum, all attendees are asked to fill out an exit survey that contains both check boxes and comment areas.



## Tool 42: Advisory Groups

Advisory group is an overarching term that can describe a wide variety of groups that help provide decision makers with recommendations that reflect the range of opinions on a topic. Because of the broad nature of their work, each advisory group's charter and process will be unique. Some are convened to address one specific question or event, others provide guidance over a longer period of time. Others are purposefully technical, and might report to a more general Action Team.

Selecting a name for an advisory group is an important part of the process and should be intentional. The following categories are not exclusive, but can be used as a reference when selecting an appropriate name for an advisory group. One word should be selected from each category to form the name of the advisory group:

Category 1: Stakeholder/Community/Citizen/Local/Technical

Category 2: Reference/Advisory/Working/Steering/Consultative/Ad hoc

Category 3: Group/Committee/Board/Task Force/Action Team

There are five components of advisory groups: 1) Mission, 2) Membership, 3) Roles and Responsibilities, 4) Operations, and 5) Documentation. Consider policies for each in the formation of any Advisory Group.

### Resources Needed

- Identification of key community and technical experts willing and able to volunteer their time and knowledge
- Staff, including extensive administrative support, to organize/prepare materials and synthesize outcomes into reports/notes
- Space to have meetings (specification are dependent upon the needs of the group)
- Technical resources as needed for members to comment on and respond to

# Resources

## **IAP2 Trainer’s Manual: Planning for Effective Public Participation**

[http://static.qwad.com.au/iap2/files/06Dec\\_TrainersPlanning.pdf](http://static.qwad.com.au/iap2/files/06Dec_TrainersPlanning.pdf)

## **IAP2 Public Participation Pillars**

[https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2\\_Federation\\_-\\_P2\\_Pillars.pdf](https://c.ymcdn.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2_Federation_-_P2_Pillars.pdf)

## **Salt Lake City Pubic Engagement Guide**

<http://www.slcdocs.com/recorder/publicengagement.pdf>

## **Minneapolis Civic Engagement Plan**

[www.minneapolis2040.com](http://www.minneapolis2040.com)

## **Community Engagement Toolkit: Guidance and Resources for Engaging Community in Planning and Policy Development**

<http://www.futurewise.org/assets/reports/CET.pdf>

## **Community Engagement Guide: A Tool to Advance Equity & Social Justice in King County**

<https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/CommunityEngagementWorksheet.pdf>

## **Making Austin: Public Participation in a New Comprehensive Plan**

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=130643>

## **Portland Community & Civic Life: Engaging Underrepresented Communities**

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/61415>

## **Portland Comprehensive Plan Update: Community Involvement Plan**

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/451620>

## **City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update: Revised Public Participation Program**

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/CompPlanPublicInvolvementProgram.pdf>

## **Seattle: Scoping the Major Review of the Comprehensive Plan: A Report on Public Engagement**

<http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/OPCD/OngoingInitiatives/SeattlesComprehensivePlan/ComprehensivePlanReportonPubilcEngagement.pdf>

## **San Francisco Public Outreach & Engagement Effectiveness Initiative**

[http://default.sfplanning.org/administration/communications/poe/POE\\_REPORT\\_FINAL.pdf](http://default.sfplanning.org/administration/communications/poe/POE_REPORT_FINAL.pdf)

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Johnston, K. A. (2018). Engagement. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication*: Wiley

Reference for Business. (2018). Community Relations. In *Encyclopedia for Small Business*.