

EQUITY BY DESIGN: Connecting with Underserved Communities in Your Planning Process



Welcome



Sarah Malpass, AICP
Senior Planner & DEI
Coordinator
Skeo Solutions



Alisa Hefner
Senior Planner &
Facilitator
Skeo Solutions



Learning Objectives

- Understand terms and concepts related to Equitable Development and how ED goals should shape community engagement.
- Explore principles for relationship development that elevate community voices in the planning process and outcome.
- Explore strategies for conducting equitable community engagement over the life cycle of a project.

Q

Are you aware of planning projects that missed the mark or did not achieve full potential because the community was not meaningfully involved?

Yes

No

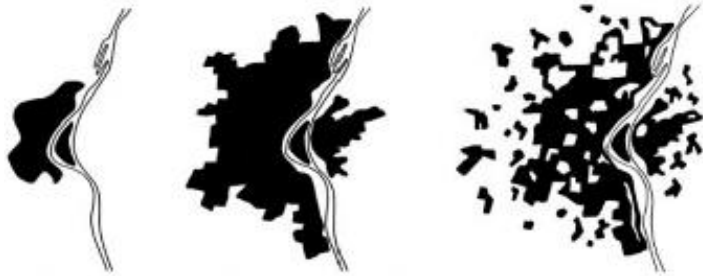
Equitable Development

Terms and Concepts

Why Do Disparities Exist Today?

Present day disparities and inequities are the result of public policy decisions. Some are:

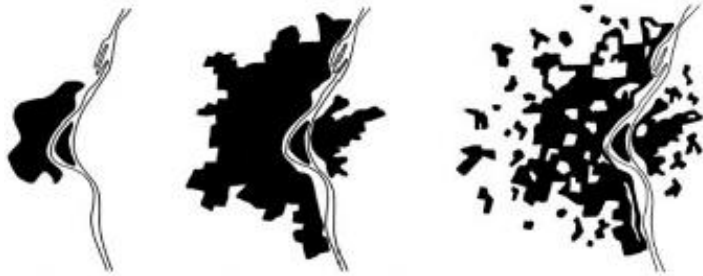
- Intentionally discriminatory and target low income, people of color, tribal and immigrant communities.
- Neutral or benignly intentioned initiatives that positively impact some communities and negatively impact others.



How can we talk about racism and anti-racism in planning and policy work?

- **Racial inequity:** When two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing.
- **Racist policy:** Any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups.
- **Racist ideas:** Any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior to another racial group in any way.
- **Racism:** A powerful collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity and are substantiated by racist ideas
- **Anti-racism:** A powerful collection of antiracist policies that lead to racial equity and are substantiated by antiracist ideas.

Credit: Ibram X. Kendi, How to be an Antiracist



What is Equity?

Improving equity is to promote justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources and rewards by institutions or systems.

Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the underlying or root causes of disparities within our society.

(Credit: D5 Coalition)



People's Climate March
April 2016
WeACT for
Environmental Justice
delegation

Equality



Equity



Equality



Everyone has everything they need to thrive!

Equity



What is Equitable Development?

Equitable development ensures that current residents benefit from development and have a meaningful role in the planning process.



Recap

Public policies have created inequitable outcomes and living conditions for some communities.

Using an equitable development approach acknowledges the root causes of inequitable development.

Equitable development ensures current residents:

1. benefit from development with improved living conditions and quality of life, and
2. have a meaningful role in the planning process that empowers residents to have influence on decisions that affect their neighborhood.



Building Productive Community Relationships

Q

Have you ever had challenges engaging with a community different from your own culture on a project?

Yes

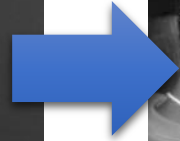
No

Q

If so, what have been the barriers? (check all that apply)

1. Limited community participation in planning efforts
2. “Check the box” community engagement approach from clients
3. Cultural differences
4. Community distrust and meetings characterized by anger and misunderstanding
5. Lack of community understanding of the technical issues
6. Other

We need to move from...



**One-way
Engagement**

**Community
Empowerment**

**Collaborative
Community Partnerships**

Start a new conversation

Begin conversations by acknowledging “the elephant in the room:”

- planning fatigue
- historic conflicts
- cultural differences
- present-day inequities



Listen to community needs

- Design an open and inclusive meeting.
- Ask many, many questions! And Listen.
- Allow communities to share about neighborhood issues that may seem unrelated to the project.
- Affirm that conditions are often unique to a particular place, history and experience.



Build trust

- ✓ Ask for and incorporate feedback.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to impact decision-making.
- ✓ Be up front about decisions that have already been made.
- ✓ Learn about community dynamics and history.
- ✓ Seek out tools that address differences and build capacity for productive engagement.
- ✓ Build authentic personal relationships.
- ✓ Ask for feedback!



Partnership Strategies

- ✓ Build relationships and partnerships with trusted community leaders and institutions.
- ✓ Consider enlisting groups with an ethnic, civic or cultural affiliation with the neighborhood.
- ✓ Community-based organizations can be good resources to conduct outreach and education within local communities.
- ✓ Consider how your project might build new relationships between community-based partners and resource partners (city agencies and other groups with potential implementation resources)



Partnerships in Practice: Voices for Vulnerable Populations

Study Purpose: Conduct outreach to identify how the County can better communicate health and safety information during wildfire smoke events, especially to vulnerable populations.

Partnerships:

- Padres Unidos de Cherryland
- Trust Clinic clients in Oakland
- Oakland Workers Collective



Recap

Identify and acknowledge the elephant in the room when there is distrust between a community and local decision-makers.

Building productive community relationships depends on believing that community residents' thoughts, feelings and expertise are vital to your work.

Build community partnerships that open doors and increase trust.

Seek opportunities to acknowledge and respond to community needs throughout the process.

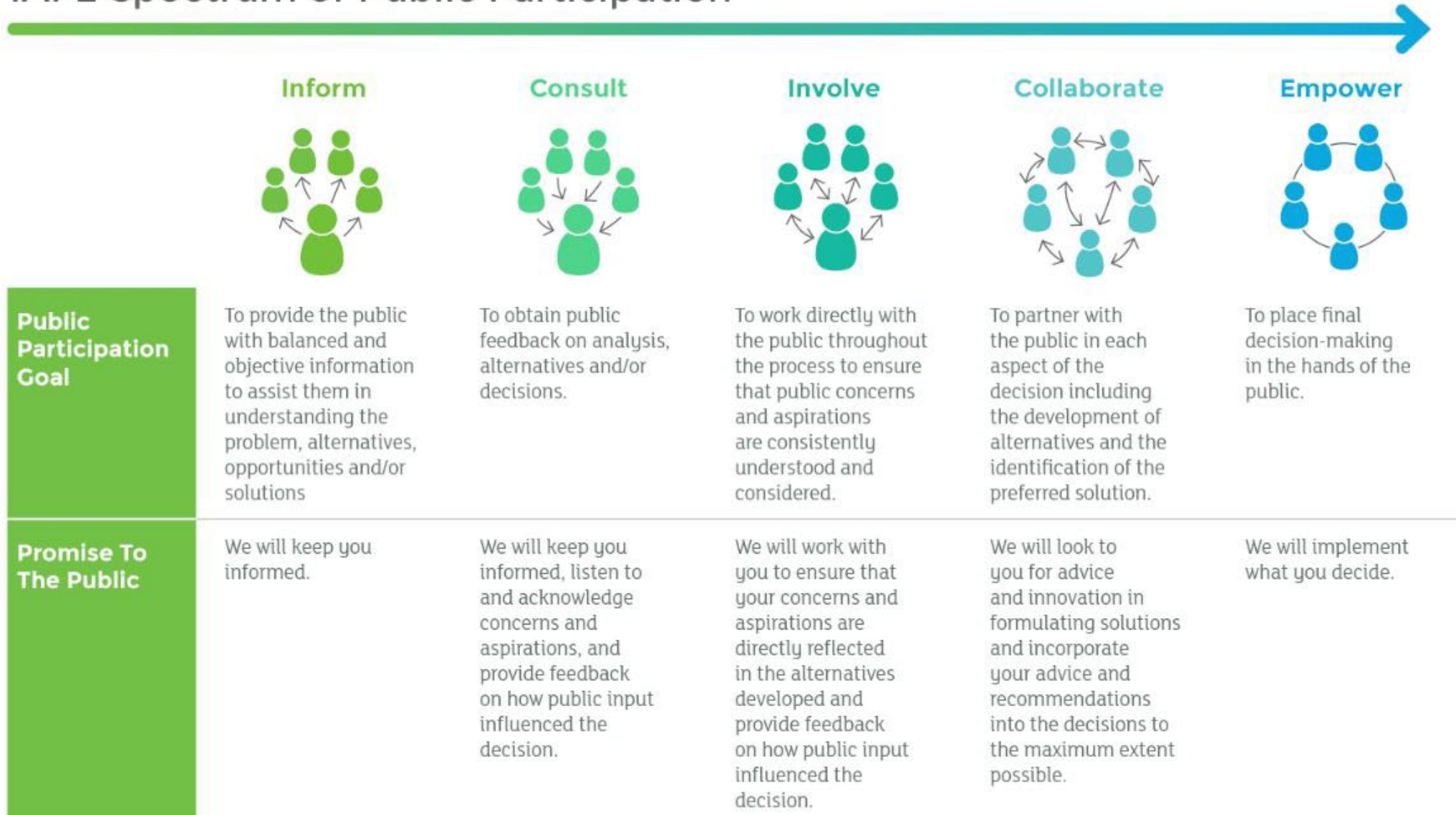


Conducting Equitable Engagement

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Determine what level of influence over project outcomes is feasible.

This may be different at different stages of the work!



Communications Strategies

- ✓ Understand the demographics and context of the community in the project's study area.
- ✓ Understand and address the needs, priorities and interests of the community.
- ✓ Use modes of communication that are familiar and effective (when possible in collaboration with the community leaders and institutions above).
- ✓ Use language the community can easily relate to and understand.
- ✓ Connect public involvement directly to decision-making and community needs.



Community Engagement Strategies

- ✓ Work with community leaders to identify appropriate meeting times and locations or visit existing meetings.
- ✓ Consider co-hosting with another local agency or organization that has programs and services to share with the community such as health services and disaster preparedness.
- ✓ Open conversations by asking about community needs and goals and connect project goals with community quality of life.
- ✓ Avoid technical jargon that may alienate residents from participating in the conversation.
- ✓ Consider arranging a community tour to understand community challenges and build relationships.



Community Engagement in Practice: Voices for Vulnerable Populations

Study Purpose: Conduct outreach to identify how the County can better communicate health and safety information during wildfire smoke events, especially to vulnerable populations.

Engagement approaches:

- Three focus groups with vulnerable populations (co-hosted with partners, at community-based locations, translation/interpretation needs met)
- In-person surveys with day laborers (conducted by partners)
- Online surveys of service providers



Forming a Public Leadership Group

- ✓ Consider a diverse and representative group (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, neighborhood longevity, a mix of emerging and long-time leadership)
- ✓ Create a space for shared learning and co-creation
- ✓ Allow the group to co-create their agendas with the project team
- ✓ Ask members to be responsible for communicating and engaging with their respective communities
- ✓ Consider setting up a technical committee or resource partners to support the group
- ✓ Use equity supports



Using Equity Supports

- ✓ Living wage compensation
- ✓ Transportation reimbursement
- ✓ Childcare
- ✓ Translation and interpretation
- ✓ Meeting at a community-selected location
- ✓ Meals from local businesses

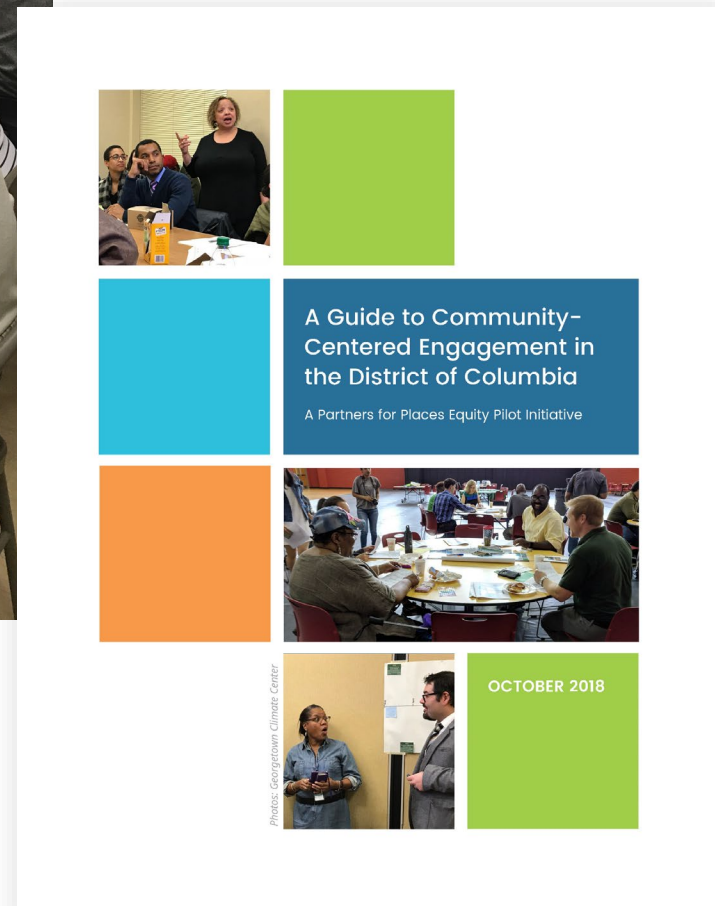
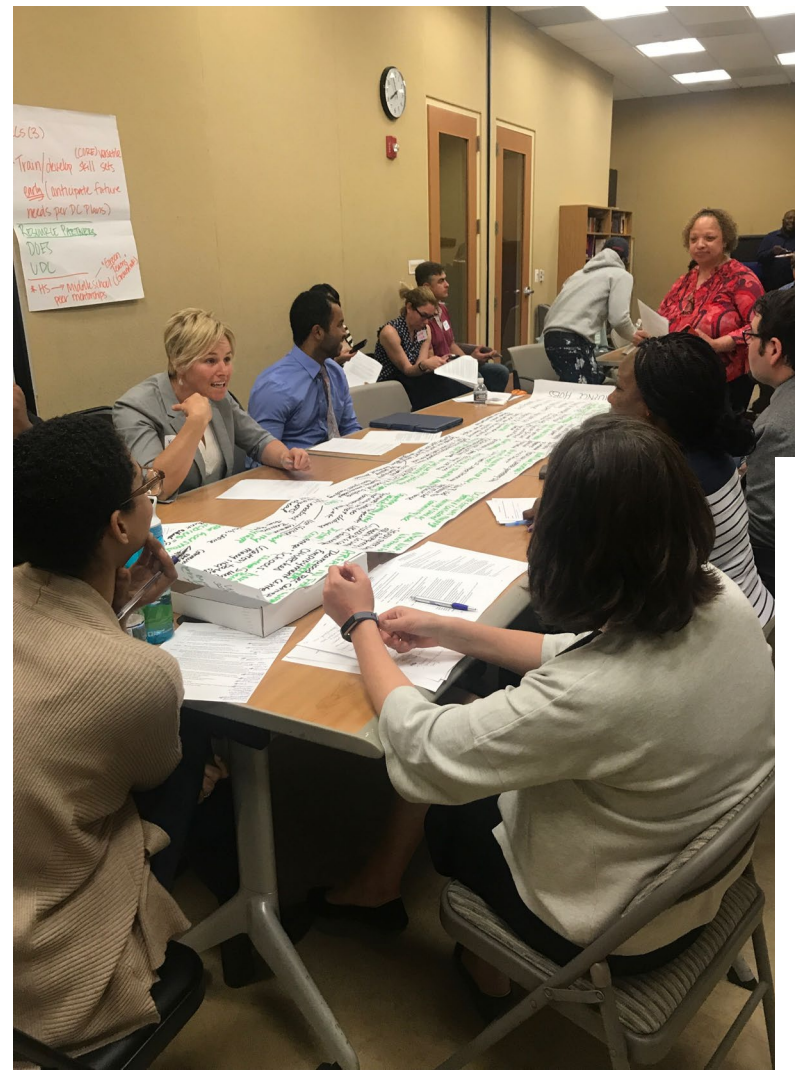


Far Northeast Ward 7's Equity Advisory Group

Purpose: Form an Equity Advisory Group (EAG) to develop recommendations that guide the District of Columbia's actions on climate change.

Highlights:

- Engaged residents in Far Northeast Ward 7 to form an Equity Advisory Group (EAG) representing the neighborhoods surrounding the Watts Branch tributary of the Anacostia River
- EAG met monthly from Jan – Jun 2018
- Conducted capacity building and shared learning exercises, along with agency resource partners
- EAG developed recommendations for the District's Department of Energy and the Environment
- Continue to meet to guide implementation
- District of Columbia has produced a guide to community-centered engagement



Recap

Use the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation to examine the life cycle of your project and identify what level of influence participants can have over outcomes at each stage.

Allow your relationship building efforts to inform the equity approaches you take with communication, outreach and partnerships.

Honor the time, wisdom and experience of participants by providing compensation and other equity supports.

Build co-creation into the process and center community preferences and culture in outcomes.



Taking it Home

Q

In reflecting on your own professional work, are there projects where you could elevate underserved voices to strengthen the outcomes and advance equity?

Yes

No

Connecting with Underserved Communities in Your Design Process

- What do you know about the community issues, goals and needs? What would you like to learn more about? What disparities are present in the community?
- What are the key stages throughout the life cycle of your project; what level of influence could participants have over outcomes at each stage? What opportunities for co-creation exist at each stage of the project?
- Who can you contact to start building relationships and partnerships with trusted community leaders and institutions?
- What opportunities can you envision to work with community partners on modes of communication and meeting logistics that are familiar and comfortable for the community? What equity approaches to communication and outreach might be important for this community?

Connecting with Underserved Communities in Your Design Process

- Could there be an opportunity to co-host meetings with a local agency or organization that has programs and services to share with the community?
- Can you envision participating in a community-led tour to understand community challenges and build relationships?
- Is this project a good fit for a Public Leadership Group?
- What equity supports might be essential to equitable community engagement for this community?
- How might your design approach center community preferences and culture?

Thank you!

Sarah Malpass

434.226.4104

smalpass@skeo.com

Alisa Hefner

434.214.8253

ahefner@skeo.com

www.skeo.com



Sarah Malpass, AICP

Senior Planner & DEI
Coordinator

Skeo Solutions



Alisa Hefner

Senior Planner &
Facilitator

Skeo Solutions