



## Engaging Stakeholders Through Authentic Community Meetings

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# INTRODUCTION

## What is community-centered authorizing?

On the heels of a global pandemic, the world is different. Students and communities have both long-standing needs—like those of long-ignored and under-resourced communities of color—combined with new aspirations—like imagining innovative, high-quality models of teaching and learning. And to listen and act from these community needs and aspirations, schooling—specifically charter schooling and authorizing—must be more proximate to these communities. In elevating community voices, authorizers can reimagine what charter schools can do for students and communities. Authorizers can guarantee students and families have access to high-quality education opportunities that meet their aspirations and needs.

To do this work effectively, Community-Centered Authorizing (CCA) must be core to each authorizer’s mission and practices, making community voice, community need, community aspirations, and community involvement central to all authorizing decisions. NACSA is designing new systems of listening to and working with communities. And as we learn and build our knowledge base, we will share tools and resources that can be implemented in your contexts.





## Principles of Community-Centered Authorizing

The beliefs and principles of CCA must be embedded throughout the authorizing lifecycle: agency commitment and capacity, application process & decision making, performance contracting, ongoing oversight and evaluation, revocation and renewal decision making. This work requires new and different ways of listening to, acting from, and building with communities, leading to a broader array of exemplary schools led by more diverse leaders that can thrive. CCA presents an opportunity for authorizers to proactively engage with communities, school applicant teams, and other key stakeholders so that the community is reflected and engaged throughout each school's life cycle.

- 1 **Communities have great ideas** about their kids' educational aspirations and needs.
- 2 All communities—including those that have been neglected for decades—have **important untapped assets**.
- 3 **Families know their children the best**, including what learning environments will work for them.
- 4 Sustainable growth and effective, innovative ideas about what schools *are* and *can do* for students will come largely from **neighborhoods where students live**.
- 5 Acting on the aspirations and needs of local communities will require **fresh thinking and action**, inclusive of and beyond typical charter schooling and authorizing practices.
- 6 **Investments in policy, practice, and passionate people** are necessary to deliver on all good ideas communities have for educating their children.





## **Authentically engaging the community through community meetings**

Authorizers should maximize all opportunities, such as community meetings, to better understand the aspirations of the community. The objective of rethinking community meetings is to enrich decision-making processes to lead to more thoughtful, more informed decisions and practices that reflect community aspirations and needs, so these decisions may have a deeper, longer-lasting impact on students and families.

Almost all authorizers gather community input in some way through public hearings. Some authorizers also collect community input through community meetings, townhalls, focus groups, or targeted outreach. Other authorizers will gather this input by creating more robust community engagement requirements for operators or new applicants. Ideally, authorizers and new applicants will share accountability for engaging the community.

This resource will share ideas for how authorizers can hold community meetings—whether they are public hearings, townhalls or focus groups—in a way that is proactive, inclusive, and authentic. This resource recognizes authorizers have a range of capacity to do this work, therefore authorizers may select ideas for implementation that are feasible in their own context. The hope is that authorizers will find this resource useful in taking the next step towards incorporating a more authentic community voice in their authorizing practices.



## The Status Quo: Public Hearings

For many authorizers throughout the country, holding public hearings is a statutory requirement that is part of the new school application or renewal process. Public hearings may also be required prior to making policy decisions or a practice authorizers use to gather information for a call for new applications or recruitment of new school developers. Based on the National Alliance for Public Charter School's charter law data base, 33 of the 45 states with charter school laws require a thorough evaluation of each application, which may include an in-person interview and a public meeting.<sup>1</sup> For new charter applications, NACSA's National Policy Index states that 23 states require public hearings as part of this process.<sup>2</sup> What these public hearings look like in practice differs widely across authorizing agencies. Regardless of the statutory requirements, public hearings are an opportunity for having authentic conversations with communities to hear about their preferences for school models, programs, and services. In some parts of the country authorizers are beginning to think strategically about how to use public hearings to have authentic conversations with the communities they serve and using this information to inform their authorizing decisions.

This tool is intended for authorizers to use to think deeply about how they might approach all types of community meetings in a new way. Authorizers should use this tool and the supplemental rubric to reflect on their current practices related to planning and holding community meetings and consider how to move beyond compliance and into the basic, emerging, and optimized levels of effectively using these methods to engage stakeholders as outlined in the rubric found in Appendix A.



# A NEW WAY FORWARD

## Preparation

An effective and inclusive community meeting requires significant forethought. It takes planning to ensure that meetings include representation from all stakeholder groups and community members and is organized for maximum and productive participation. Without this planning process, community meetings may only include members of the community who have easy access to information, who have schedules that allow them to attend, and often may be the voices of the community authorizers have already captured. To truly hear from all voices in the community you are serving takes meaningful preparation.

### Define the community and identify stakeholders

A precursor to any community engagement activity is defining the community. Authorizers serve a variety of types of communities and may define community in a variety of ways depending on their context. For example, a statewide authorizer may define a community as the entire state, while a district authorizer may define the community as the boundaries of their district.<sup>3</sup> Other authorizers may define their communities as the neighborhoods in which their schools are located or in which they intend to open new schools.

Authorizers should also identify key stakeholders who have interests or concerns about the schools being discussed during the community meetings and invite them to participate. Parents are the most important stakeholder group in any community and should be continuously engaged. Additional stakeholders may include community-based organizations or other organizations that serve the community, local businesses, political organizations, such as neighborhood councils and elected representatives, and district staff. Other stakeholders may include staff from neighboring traditional and charter schools.<sup>4</sup>

Reaching out to key stakeholders in advance will help to ensure that you can engage them in a productive and transparent manner. It may be helpful to have individual or small-group conversations with some of the stakeholders before the public meetings, so you are better able to understand and address their concerns at the meetings.



## Questions to consider

- How are we defining community?
- Who are our primary stakeholders?
- Who are our secondary stakeholders?

### Define the purpose and scope

Being clear about the purpose of a meeting helps participants understand their roles and its objectives and helps to successfully achieve the intended outcomes.<sup>5</sup> For example, is the purpose of the meeting to gather information to inform potential requests for applications, to inform a decision about a school, or to inform a policy change? It's also important to be clear about the meeting's placement in a continuum of activities and planned next steps—what activities have already happened and what will come next?

The purpose of the meeting should drive the scope or content of the discussion. Having a clear purpose and scope will ensure the meeting is focused, has realistic parameters, and will lead to clear next steps.<sup>6</sup> To guide the scope of the discussion, it is helpful to have a meeting agenda, clear categories for the discussion, and guiding questions within each category.

Finally, once the meeting agenda is complete, it's helpful to narrow the definition of the community that should be engaged for this particular purpose. For example, if your community is the entire state, but you are holding meetings about a school in a particular geographic area, perhaps the appropriate community to engage for those meetings is in that particular geographic area.

## Sample Guiding Questions

Purpose: To learn about families' preferences for new middle school programs and models.

- What skills are most important for students to have when they graduate from middle school?
- What kinds of academic programs do you think your community needs?
- What kinds of academic supports do you think are important for a new school to provide?







## Build internal support

One of the early and crucial steps in the planning process will be to build support for a new way of holding community meetings. Board members, authorizing staff, and other staff involved in authorizing activities may be resistant to the idea of putting a lot more effort into making community meetings meaningful. It will be important to have early and ongoing conversations to explain to internal stakeholders why it's important that community input is authentic and that the meetings are not just a compliance exercise. The questions below can help guide a discussion about why this work is important.

Some internal stakeholders may be concerned about the staff time and capacity that this new way of holding community meetings and public hearings will take.<sup>7</sup> For those staff, it may be helpful to map out the roles, responsibilities, and time commitments for planning and facilitating the meetings and figure out if any shifts in other projects are needed or if you can find additional capacity through some of the ideas in the next section.<sup>8</sup>



## Questions for Conversations with Staff

- What is our mission as an authorizer?
- Why do we do this work?
- How are the schools in our portfolio building on the assets and addressing the needs of our community? In what ways are we falling short?
- Why do we need authentic community input?<sup>9</sup>

### Assemble the team

Once authorizers have defined their community and stakeholders and clarified the purpose and scope of the meeting, authorizers should assemble a team to plan and facilitate the meetings. The team should ideally include people who have strong relationships with community members as well as people who share the backgrounds or experiences of community members.<sup>10</sup> If there aren't staff who have these relationships or experiences within the authorizing organization, engaging partner organizations or creating advisory councils or committees that can inform meeting planning can be a helpful strategy. A community-based organization or advisory committee may include members who have strong relationships in the community, have staff who speak the languages of community members, and may be helpful in facilitating an open dialogue.<sup>11</sup> If you don't have representatives from community-based organizations or staff who speak the most common languages of community members, consider engaging a translator or translation service to translate relevant documents and the proceedings into these languages.

*In Nevada, the State Public Charter School Authority has a community working group that meets quarterly to advise on the SPCSA's activities. The group includes representatives of municipalities, chambers of commerce, local-child welfare agencies, and community organizations that support students.*<sup>12</sup>

The team should also be comprised of staff who have the skills needed to effectively plan and facilitate the meetings.<sup>13</sup> These skills include, “being a clear communicator, being an active listener, and having the ability to remain impartial when asking questions.”<sup>14</sup> It is also helpful to have a notetaker as well as administrative support for meetings. If you have limited capacity to support all of these roles you might consider hiring a consultant, engaging community partners to support meeting facilitation, or hiring temporary staff for roles such as notetaking and administrative support.

## Skills to Seek Out in Team Members

- Established connection to the community
- Shared background or experience with the community
- Existing relationships developed in the community
- Speak the language of the community members

*“Albuquerque Public Schools has created a choice advisory group, which includes students, CEOs, legislators, and other stakeholders, to advise the district on school choice related issues and offerings. Albuquerque has opened the invitation to anyone who wants to join the group.”*<sup>15</sup>

## Eliminate barriers to participation

Authorizers should consider how they can address barriers community members may face when trying to attend a community meeting, such as providing translation services, childcare, and transportation.<sup>16</sup> If there isn't funding to address all of these barriers, authorizers may want to prioritize those barriers that are most important for their community, which could be determined based on a community needs assessment. Other options to consider include providing incentives to participate so community members can use the funds to address the barriers that are most significant to them, or jointly hosting with another local, invested organization. Partner organizations may also be able to support authorizers in addressing some of these barriers, such as providing translation services, childcare, or even the option of space or participation in regularly scheduled meetings.

## Outreach

### Conduct intentional outreach

An effective community meeting should include a variety of voices that represent the community or communities the authorizer serves. In order to achieve sufficient representation, authorizers should proactively and intentionally publicize the meeting and conduct targeted outreach to specific individuals, groups, or organizations in the community.<sup>17</sup> To reach traditionally under-represented voices, consider working with leaders within the community or other community-based organizations to help advertise and market community meetings.





## Examples of Community-Based Organizations to Support Outreach

- Faith-based organizations
- YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, or other after-school programs
- Preschools, daycares, and other local schools (including other elementary, middle, and high schools in the community)
- Local political organizations, municipal or civic associations
- Local nonprofit organizations, including those providing food and health services
- Community centers
- Local libraries
- Local businesses

### Use a variety of communication vehicles

Authorizers likely have a variety of ways that information regarding an upcoming community meeting is typically advertised. Take time to identify current communication vehicles and opportunities and to reflect on whether current communication vehicles are effective.<sup>[18](#)</sup>

Authorizers may consider using a variety of ways to publicize events in order to reach a broader audience, including the following:

## Virtual Marketing Vehicles

- **Website** – Have a portion of the organization’s website dedicated to upcoming meetings, events, and public hearings that the community is invited to. Dedicate a consistent area for the public to reference. This can be helpful so members of the community always know where to go to seek information.
- **E-newsletters** – Send out regular communication through an e-newsletter and including information about upcoming community meetings, that could also direct community members to the organization’s website for more information.
- **Social media** – Utilize the organization’s social media channels, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Tik Tok to publicize events. Consider asking other partner organizations or schools to use their social media channels to share more broadly.
- **Robo-calls or texts** – Send out automated calls or texts to families in the district or community to publicize upcoming community meetings or events. This can be important for families who may not use social media or are unlikely to check an authorizer’s website.

## On the Ground Marketing

- **Community Canvassing** – Send staff into communities to talk to families and community members, including going to other community meetings, community centers, businesses, or religious institutions to advertise upcoming public hearings or meetings.
- **Newsletters or mailers** – Send out paper newsletters or flyers to those invited to upcoming community meetings or public hearings.
- **Working with schools** – Have charter schools disseminate information about upcoming meetings or public hearings to their own school communities.
- **Word of mouth** – Leverage the impact of individual word of mouth communication throughout a community. Encourage individuals that have strong connections to the community to share the details of community meetings with others in their network.

No matter the vehicle used for communicating to the community, authorizers should ensure that communication materials have been translated into the most common preferred languages of community members. Also consider translating other materials related to the community meetings.

***Chicago Public Schools has a dedicated inbox for community members to provide comments related to the topics of public hearings. District staff review all comments. Frequently many people express the same points of view in their emails, but the district follows up with people who share unique points of view.<sup>19</sup>***

## Ensure meeting times and locations meet the needs of participants

Community members will be more likely to attend community meetings if the time and location are convenient and accessible. Consider surveying community members or holding small focus groups to determine the best times and locations for a meeting. Authorizers may want to find out if there are other community events that are in conflict with the event, what are typical work and school schedules for members of the community, and potentially any religious or cultural holidays or events that may conflict.

Authorizers may also want to consider having flexible options for hosting events or meetings, such as hosting some meetings in a virtual or hybrid environment. Many authorizers have found that holding meetings virtually has increased access and attendance for many attendees who would not have otherwise participated. For meetings held in person, make sure the location of the meeting is accessible to community members and the meeting venue is a comfortable space. Meetings could be held at specific school sites, at community-based organizations, or in other places within the community rather than in a district or state office that may not be as accessible for certain community members.

***The District of Columbia Charter School Board has moved most Board meetings to a virtual format after experiencing greater engagement during the pandemic when they began holding meetings virtually.<sup>20</sup>***



# Facilitation

An effective public meeting does much more than disseminate information. Intentional facilitation strategies should be utilized to foster inclusive, two-way communication and help to ensure that the stakeholders most impacted by community challenges, and perhaps have the most to gain, are afforded real opportunities to amplify their perspectives prior to final decisions being made.

## Choosing and preparing facilitators

Rather than assume this inclusive environment will organically happen, carefully choose experienced facilitators who are:

- familiar with local context,
- as neutral as possible towards the issues being presented, and
- fully committed to ensuring respectful, inclusive discussion between stakeholders that will provide valuable qualitative data for authorizers and school operators to consider as part of their planning and decision-making process

Facilitators may include a staff member or liaison, a community leader, and/or representatives from the applicant group or charter school. In instances where a city, county, or district entity manages a particular type of community meeting, such as a public hearing to discuss a pending charter application, it is advantageous to prepare the facilitator to the extent possible to optimize the meeting by creating a participatory rather than passive atmosphere.

While facilitation can be a demanding role, particularly within a contentious situation, the point of most community meetings is to provide information and solicit input from participants. This is less onerous than rallying a disparate group to solve a problem or compromise on a solution immediately. Facilitators are not responsible for bringing stakeholders to agreement in this scenario and can instead focus on the strategies and techniques below to conduct productive public meetings that capture important feedback.

## Creating a safe and inclusive environment

At hearings and meetings related to sensitive topics—which school options for children and potential authorizer actions often are—emotions can run high.

**Tensions and power dynamics among attendees can inhibit some stakeholders, particularly those from traditionally marginalized groups, from feeling comfortable contributing their perspectives and opinions.**

Facilitators must strive to cultivate and maintain a sense of inclusivity, generally defined here as authentic, empowered participation and a tangible sense of belonging. To accomplish this, it is necessary to consider the barriers to stakeholder contribution, as discussed in the previous section on planning. One of the most important things facilitators can do to ensure everyone feels safe to voice their ideas and opinions in a public setting is to make sure there's nothing surprising or vague about the purpose of the meeting.<sup>[21](#)</sup>

At the onset of the convening, facilitators should remind attendees of its specific goals, and share contextual process and timeframe details. This orients stakeholders around the benchmark activities and decisions made to date (as well as why, how, and by whom they were made) and any upcoming actions. Facilitators should also explicitly verbalize an expectation of respect for diverse communication styles and viewpoints. They can attempt to set the audience at ease through the use of humor and encourage open discussion by requesting all participants refrain from using critical language or interrupting while anyone is sharing. A talented and experienced facilitator will encourage a group to identify its interests and assets and examine its beliefs and values—which can sometimes surface the group's shared priorities, such as safe, high-quality schools for their children—and reflect on the assumptions that bely them. Other techniques that can create and maintain a respectful and inclusive environment are to structure time for all interested stakeholders to speak, repeat those time constraints as needed, and maintain pacing to provide equitable opportunities for input.

## Specific strategies to solicit input from all stakeholders

In many spaces, the most vocal critics can easily overshadow the rest of the audience. Even when they may not represent the majority opinion, a few stakeholders can disrupt the purpose of a public hearing by making others uncomfortable or seizing a disproportionate amount of airtime. As mentioned previously in the planning section, organizers should determine the need for translation support and make efforts to maximize accessibility ahead of the event. Wherever possible, it is advised to limit presentations to no more than 20% of the meeting's scheduled duration; thereby reserving the majority of the time for participant feedback. However, facilitators must be proactive and persistent in their efforts to gather input from all stakeholders throughout the gathering.

During the meeting itself, facilitators can make non-educators more comfortable by proactively explaining concepts, jargon, and acronyms that may not be familiar to all participants. They must also intentionally invite quiet participants to speak. Some ways to accomplish this include referencing time limits to hold space for all viewpoints, initiating a round that gives all individuals at a table or in a row time to present their views in seated order, and/or utilizing small group “breakouts” that may feel less intimidating to stakeholders. Facilitators should draw people out with open-ended questions rather than binary yes and no responses that would not provide rich information to inform authorizer practice or decision making.





Other Tools for Collecting Input: Other inclusive practices include giving participants the option to contribute feedback via email or text as well as providing oral input at the community meeting, as some attendees may experience hesitancy due to language barriers or other access challenges.

- **Email inbox** – Consider setting up a specific email address and collect public comments or community feedback on a rolling basis, on a variety of topics. Ensure there is a dedicated staff member to manage the inbox, and that this opportunity is communicated to the public.
- **Dedicated phone number** – In addition to an email inbox, consider setting up a dedicated phone line to collect texts or voicemails from community members to gather their ideas and input.

## Managing conflict

Facilitators, as well as any authorizer and school staff attending public hearings and meetings, should be prepared to deal with difficult behavior. At least some of the participants at the hearing may have had limited opportunities to be authentically heard and considered in decision making; frustration can be expected. In these situations, it is even more important for a facilitator to listen actively and respectfully to everyone.<sup>22</sup>

1

Encourage people to speak up if they seem reluctant to disagree with a dominant speaker by legitimizing strong feelings on difficult issues. Consider: ***“On issues that are very important to us, it is normal and expected that people will disagree. We are here to listen to all opinions. Does anyone have a different perspective to share?”***

2

Deal with excessive repetition by paraphrasing the general idea of someone who repeats the same point multiple times. This captures their input in a non-judgmental way, but provides a clear signal for the group to move on. Consider: ***“I’ve heard you articulate ((summary)) and have noted it. We need to ensure everyone has time to share at this meeting.”***

3

Deal with interruptions by stepping in immediately. Consider: ***“Each individual here deserves time to voice their thoughts without being disturbed.”*** Reminding the audience of time limits, such as two minutes per person, and maintaining that pace can also mitigate interruptions.



## Involving Community Partnership Organizations

Engaging with local organizations to co-plan or co-facilitate community meetings is an effective strategy to encourage stakeholder attendance and participation. Local education councils, advisory groups, family associations, wellness centers, and faith-based organizations generally have established, trusting relationships with diverse stakeholder groups and can connect authorizers with their audiences.

## Analyzing Feedback

After each meeting, it's important to synthesize and analyze the feedback provided so it can be used to inform decisions and can be communicated back to participants and other stakeholders. Reflect on the purpose and scope of the meeting and determine how the feedback collected from the community will inform the decision-making process. Communicating summaries of feedback from meetings and how that feedback was utilized in the decision-making process is critical to building trust with participants and letting them know that their voices have been heard and their participation was worthwhile.

### Document feedback

To ensure you are capturing all feedback it is critical to have a notetaker at each meeting or public hearing or to record the meeting. It may be helpful to have a transcript of the discussion in addition to a summary. If feasible, it's helpful to also document who made each comment, how frequently a point was made, and if there was widespread agreement or disagreement. This level of notetaking may not be appropriate for a summary document but will be helpful for internal use.



## Analyze the Data

Once the feedback is documented it should be analyzed to identify key points and themes. Other data to incorporate in the analysis includes attendance and participation data. Who attended each meeting and what geographic and demographic groups do they represent? How many of the community members who would be affected by the topic at hand attended the meeting?

When analyzing the data, it's important to ensure that you are aware of any power dynamics or systemic issues that may have impacted the discussions and the input provided.<sup>[23](#)</sup> The staff who are interpreting the data should be cognizant of these issues. It is also important to reflect on the authenticity of the data. Did the input represent the true views of participants or was there an effort by a coordinating body to emphasize a particular message? Consider sharing the analysis with community partners, stakeholders, or an advisory committee so they can provide input on your interpretation and help to ensure it is not biased.<sup>[24](#)</sup>

## Make an informed decision

Once you have analyzed all available data you can use it to make an informed decision. Every authorizer has different processes for making decisions and stakeholders who may need to be involved. There isn't one specific way to weight the community feedback and to handle different points of view—it is a nuanced process that involves judgement as well as a determination of public good. The feedback should play a meaningful role in informing a decision. Trends in feedback should be a discrete criterion in making the decision but weighed differently depending on the context. Similar to a capacity interview, community input should provide additional information that informs a more thoughtful decision.



## Follow Up

Once you have analyzed the feedback and other data, it's important to share the information with participants, community members, and other stakeholders so they know they have been heard and that their participation has been worthwhile. It's also important to communicate how the feedback will be used to inform decision-making.

### Communicate the results

When communicating the results of your meetings, think about how to present the information to different audiences using multiple formats and vehicles that are accessible to each audience. For example, a PowerPoint presentation or a short brief may be a better communication vehicle than a dense report for community members and some stakeholders.<sup>[25](#)</sup> You likely have existing communication vehicles. It's helpful to assess how they are working and then determine where there are gaps that you might want to fill to better reach particular audiences.<sup>[26](#)</sup> Communication vehicles may include newsletters, Listservs, emails, or sections of websites. Key findings should be clear and easily accessible.<sup>[27](#)</sup>

### Engage in continuous feedback loops

Community engagement should be an ongoing process that includes regular opportunities for input, including community meetings or public hearings. It's important to think about any community meeting or hearing as part of an ongoing process of engaging the community and seeking community input. The timing and nature of these engagement activities will depend on the community context. For example, if you are experiencing rapid changes—such as dramatic increases or decreases in enrollment—you will likely want more frequent touchpoints. It is helpful to have a process for communicating the feedback you receive at regular intervals. This might be in a regular newsletter, email blast following community events, or posting on your website. Other ideas are described in the resource on communicating and using results.





# RUBRIC

The rubric below outlines stages of implementation for authentic, inclusive community meetings. The Basic level defines an initial foundation upon which to build relationships and feedback loops with stakeholders. The Emerging and Optimized Levels articulate progression towards authentic and robust community meetings that lead to more thoughtful and informed decisions.

## Preparation

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Define the community and stakeholders</b>	You have a clear definition of the community you serve which is defined by geographic radius	You have a clear definition of the community you serve which may be defined by geographic radius, target neighborhood, or a particular student population.	You have a clear definition of the community you serve which may be defined by geographic radius, target neighborhood, or a particular student population. You are aware of your stakeholder groups and prioritize engaging them. You are also prioritizing including historically underrepresented voices.
<b>Define the purpose and scope</b>	The purpose of the meeting and role of participants is clear. There is an agenda for the meeting.	The purpose of the meeting and role of the participants is clear and documented on an agenda available to all participants in advance of the meeting. The meeting is designed to gather community input to inform possible authorizing practices and decisions.	<p>The purpose of the meeting and role of the participants is clear and documented on an agenda available to all participants in advance of the meeting. The meeting is designed to gather community input to inform possible authorizing practices and decisions.</p> <p>The meeting, or multiple meetings, are organized in co-sponsorship with a community organization at a community site.</p> <p>Other barriers to involvement are planned for such as interpretation needs, childcare needs, or incentivizing participation.</p>

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Build internal support</b>	Authorizing staff have a conversation with internal stakeholders to discuss the importance of community input.	Authorizing staff have early and ongoing conversations with internal stakeholders to discuss the importance of community input.	Authorizing staff have built support for holding authentic community meetings that go beyond a compliance exercise.
<b>Assemble the team</b>	Authorizers assemble a team to plan and run the meetings.	<p>Authorizers assemble a team to plan and run the meetings. The team includes people who have strong relationships with community members as well as people who share the backgrounds or experiences of community members.</p> <p>The team also includes staff who have the skills needed to effectively plan and facilitate the meetings.</p>	<p>Authorizers assemble a team to plan and run the meetings. The team includes people who have strong relationships with community members as well as people who share the backgrounds or experiences of community members. Authorizers also engage a translator or translation services.</p> <p>The team also includes staff who have the skills needed to effectively plan and facilitate the meetings.</p>
<b>Eliminate barriers to participation</b>	Authorizers consider what barriers may exist for some participants and take action to eliminate one, such as adjusting the meeting time and location.	Authorizers address some barriers to participation, such as childcare or transportation.	Authorizers address the most important barriers to participation, such as childcare or transportation, based on an assessment of community needs.

## Outreach

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Conduct intentional outreach</b>	Authorizing team conducts outreach to individuals, groups, or organizations in the community.	Authorizing team conducts intentional and targeted outreach to individuals, groups, organizations in the community.	Direct outreach to specific groups and individuals, potentially in partnership with community-based organizations.
<b>Use a variety of communication vehicles</b>	Information regarding the community meeting is posted on the authorizer's website.	<p>All publications are translated into the top three languages represented in the community.</p> <p>Information regarding the community meeting is posted on a variety of online and print resources including the authorizer's website, social media, newsletters, or mailers.</p>	<p>All publications and meeting materials are translated into every language with a significant representation in the community.</p> <p>Multiple media outlets are used to reach less involved populations and communities including authorizers' websites, social media, robo-calls or texts, community canvassing, and paper newsletters.</p>
<b>Ensure meeting times &amp; locations meet the needs of participants</b>	Meetings have a virtual and in-person option to meet the needs of participants.	<p>Meetings have a virtual and in-person option to meet the needs of participants and are held at a variety of days and times based on feedback from community members.</p> <p>Meetings are held at a variety of locations and spaces in the community such as school sites and community-based organizations.</p>	<p>Meetings have a virtual and in-person option to meet the needs of participants and are held at a variety of days and times based on feedback from community members.</p> <p>Meetings are held at a variety of locations and spaces in the community such as school sites and community-based organizations.</p> <p>Authorizing teams partner with schools in their portfolio to spread information regarding upcoming community meetings.</p> <p>Authorizing teams leverage community organizations and/or specific individuals within the community to spread information regarding upcoming community meetings.</p>

# Facilitation

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Choose and prepare facilitators</b>	An objective individual facilitates the public meeting according to the predetermined agenda.	An objective individual, familiar with the topic at hand, prepares to facilitate the public meeting according to the predetermined agenda to achieve certain objectives.	An objective individual, knowledgeable of both the topic at hand and the community in which the public meeting will take place, prepares to facilitate the meeting according to the predetermined agenda to achieve a set of transparent objectives.
<b>Create a safe and inclusive environment</b>	The facilitator suggests a set of norms to establish ground rules for a safe and inclusive environment for the public meeting.	Norms are co-created with all stakeholders to establish ground rules for a safe and inclusive environment for the public meeting.	Norms are co-created and followed with fidelity to maintain a safe and inclusive environment for the public meeting.
<b>Solicit input from all stakeholders</b>	The facilitator encourages input from all stakeholders but relies primarily on attendees' willingness to volunteer information.	The facilitator encourages input from all stakeholders, takes notice of who has not contributed, and deploys strategies to solicit feedback from all.	The facilitator solicits input from all stakeholders and effectively utilizes strategies to elevate quiet and/or traditionally marginalized perspectives.
<b>Manage conflict</b>	The facilitator addresses egregious behavior and conflict during the meeting.	The facilitator addresses inequitable dynamics and conflict, and uses mitigation strategies to maintain the flow of the meeting.	The facilitator addresses inequitable dynamics and conflict, and effectively uses strategies to diffuse tension, maintain the flow of the meeting, and ensure all participants have opportunities to share their perspectives.
<b>Engage with partner organizations</b>	Community organizations adjacent to the authorizer and/or the school operator are informed of the public meeting and given an opportunity to participate.	A number of community organizations adjacent to the authorizer, the school operator, and/or involved with target stakeholders are invited to co-plan and co-present the meeting.	Several community organizations with trusted connections to the authorizer, school operator, and target stakeholders co-plan, co-host, and engage their audiences before and during the public meeting.



## Analyzing Feedback

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Document feedback</b>	A notetaker captures all feedback	A notetaker captures all feedback and a transcript or summary is created	A notetaker documents who made each comment, how frequently a point was made, and if there was widespread agreement or disagreement. A transcript or summary is created.
<b>Analyze the data</b>	Data are analyzed to identify key points and themes	Data are analyzed to identify key points and themes. Attendance and participation data are analyzed and incorporated.	Data are analyzed to identify key points and themes. Attendance and participation data are analyzed and incorporated.
<b>Make an informed decision</b>	The decision is informed by community feedback	The decision is informed by a detailed analysis of community feedback.	The decision is informed by a detailed analysis of community feedback.

## Follow Up

Step	Basic (Level 1)	Emerging (Level 2)	Optimized (Level 3)
<b>Communicate the results</b>	All results are communicated to the public using existing communication vehicles.	All results are communicated to multiple audiences using a variety of communication vehicles and formats that are appropriate for the different audiences.	All results are communicated to multiple audiences using a variety of communication vehicles and formats that are appropriate for the different audiences. These vehicles include new strategies that address gaps in communication to particular audiences.
<b>Engage in continuous feedback loops</b>	There are regular opportunities for input, including community meetings.	There are regular opportunities for input, including community meetings. Each community meeting is part of an ongoing process of engaging the community and seeking community input. The timing and nature of engagement activities depend on the community context.	<p>There are regular opportunities for input, including community meetings. Each community meeting is part of an ongoing process of engaging the community and seeking community input. The timing and nature of engagement activities depend on the community context.</p> <p>There is a process for communicating the feedback received at regular intervals. This might be in a regular newsletter, email blast following community events, or posting on the website.</p>

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