



C2C: Clean Energy to Communities

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Incorporating Community Voices into Clean Energy Planning and Deployment

Cohort Summary
July 2023



Incorporating Community Voices into Clean Energy Planning and Deployment

TA Session

Defining an Engagement
Baseline

July

Navigating Difficult
Conversations

September

Promoting Accountability and
Transparency

November

August

Building Relationships and
Using Data to Advance
Equitable Engagement

October

Addressing Structural
Challenges and Formalizing
Inclusive Engagement

December

Peer Showcase and Conclusion

Cohort Participants

- **Ann Arbor, Michigan**
- **Boston Metropolitan Area
Planning Council, Massachusetts**
- **Central Vermont Regional
Planning Commission, Vermont**
- **Fairfax, Virginia**
- **Fremont, California**
- **Glendale Water and Power,
California**
- **Idaho Falls Power, Idaho**
- **Ithaca, New York**
- **Los Alamos County, New Mexico**
- **Lowell, Massachusetts**
- **North Central Texas Council
of Governments, Texas**
- **Palm Springs, California**
- **Portland, Oregon**
- **Reno, Nevada**
- **San Diego Association
of Governments, California**

Moving toward collaboration and shared leadership requires clear communication, strong partnerships with community members, and trust-building

Outreach/Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Shared Leadership
Some Community Involvement	More Community Involvement	Better Community Involvement Communication flows both ways,	Community Involvement Communication flow is bidirectional	Strong Bidirectional Relationship Final decision making is at community level.
Communication flows from one to the other, to inform	Communication flows to the community and then back, answer seeking	participatory form of communication Involves more participation with community on issues.	Forms partnerships with community on each aspect of project from development to solution.	Entities have formed strong partnership structures.
Provides community with information.	Gets information or feedback from the community.	Entities cooperate with each other.	Entities form bidirectional communication channels.	Outcomes: Broader health/well-being outcomes affecting broader community.
Entities coexist.	Entities share information.	Outcomes: Visibility of partnership established with increased cooperation.	Outcomes: Partnership building, trust building.	Strong bidirectional trust built.
Outcomes: Optimally, establishes communication channels and channels for outreach.	Outcomes: Develops connections.			

Source: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). (2015, June 25). [Principles of community engagement](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/index.html) (2nd ed.). NIH Publication No. 11-7782. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Health. Retrieved from <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/index.html>. Public Domain.

Best practices for successful partnerships to advance equitable engagement

- **Partner with trusted CBOs.** *Work with long-standing community organizations that are trusted service delivery institutions in the community. Look for organizations that are trusted by communities who may not trust the local government.*
- **Let community organizations take the lead.** *CBOs understand specific needs in the community and can therefore take the lead in identifying specific needs and creating solutions.*
- **Fully engage in hard conversations about feasibility.** *Recognizing the organizational capacity of the CBO is important to ensure that the programs are not going to overload them or their available funding. Local government, other CBOs, or other institutions can fill other gaps a specific CBO is unable to take on. Be present and build relationships BEFORE opportunities arise and focus on co-benefits that programs can bring to all partners.*

Institutional constraints can prevent representative, meaningful community engagement

Timeline for implementation vs. time needed for relationship-building

Limited communication outlets

Uncoordinated community engagement efforts

Financial resources

Lack of established engagement channels

Focus on intent over impact and reputation

Time and staff capacity

Actual willingness of government to change paths based on feedback

Meaningful buy-in from elected officials

Siloing of energy-related issues, not connecting them to other local priorities

Working successfully in communities requires self-reflection from entities that have historically held power

- **Questions such as the following can help on this self-reflection journey:**
 - Historically, how has your organization shown up in and been perceived by your community?
 - How can you best represent your entity knowing its history and how it is perceived in the community?
 - How can you best handle difficult conversations that arise?
 - When engagement efforts didn't go as you had hoped or when you encountered a difficult situation, what strategies do you use to care for yourself and others?
 - What additional support would help you feel more confident navigating difficult conversations that arise during community engagement activities?

Data and mapping tools can help lay the groundwork for understanding a community

DAC Definition	DOT*	DOE	CEJST
Total # of tracts	85,508	74,170	74,134
Total population	330M	325M	328M
Total # of DACs	30,323	15,172	27,248
Percentage (%)	35.46%	20.46%	36.76%
Total DAC population	110M	56M	109M
Percentage (%)	33.37%	17.15%	33.26%

*Population showed in millions

*New definition published in 2023: <https://www.transportation.gov/priorities/equity/justice40/etc-explorer>

Structural barriers to participation can roughly be split out into three interconnected groups

Resource Barriers

Geographic location

Childcare

Language

Competing priorities

Lack of compensation

Immigration status

Institutional constraints

Cultural/ Historical Barriers

Jargon

Cultural norms

Intercommunity dynamics

Reliance on “free” community organizers or CBOs

Government organizational structure and functions

Communication

Stigma

Implicit bias

Personal Barriers

Not seeing results from past engagement efforts

Relevance and importance to my life

Seeing the point – expecting something will actually change

Distrust of the government

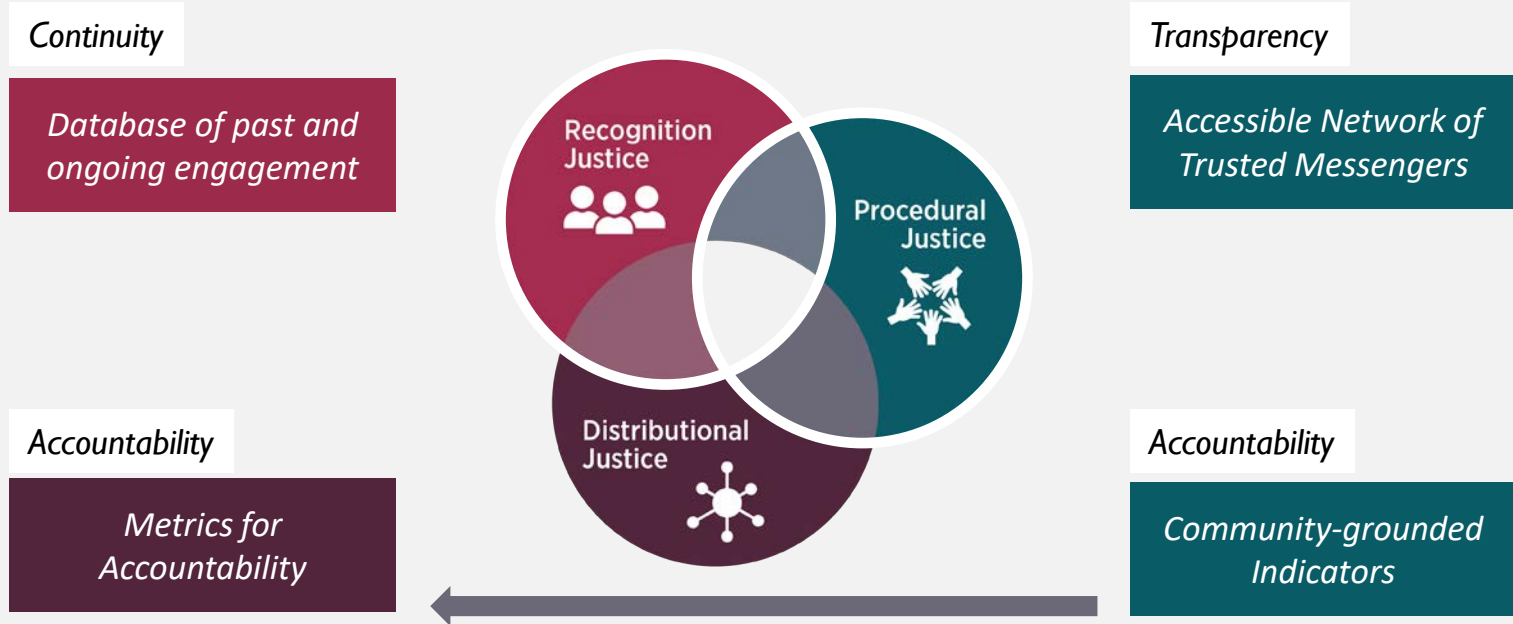
Prior trauma

Burnout from consistent engagement

Community Benefits Agreements can help build trust and secure positive outcomes

- **Community Benefit Agreement:** A voluntary but legally binding agreement between a developer or company and nearby community organizations that directs benefits from new development projects to local people
- **Community Benefit Plan:** A community benefits plan is a non-legally binding roadmap for how a developer will engage with communities during a project. While they do not always include designated funding or enforcement mechanisms, CBPs can help pave the way for future, legally binding community benefits agreements by laying some of the groundwork and bringing stakeholders together early on. All BIL and IRA funding from DOE requires a CBO
- **Workforce and Community Agreement:** A range of formal agreements when project establishes the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project
- **Project Labor Agreement:** a pre-hire collective-bargaining agreement with one or more labor organizations that establish the terms and conditions of employment for a specific project
- **Community workforce agreement:** a PLA that includes community-oriented commitments relating to equitable workforce development, social justice, small business support and/or other issues

Long-term strategies to advance justice may include accountability metrics, community-grounded indicators, relationships with trusted messengers, and internal coordination of engagement efforts



Barriers to accountability and transparency

Lack of bandwidth at organization level

Varying receptiveness to transparency/ accountability mechanisms

Uncertainty about how to effectively maintain and utilize connections with clean energy advocates

Lack of coordination among different offices and departments

Lack of clarity on initial engagement goals

Lack of organized effort to chronicle previous engagement efforts