DRAFT 2 City of Cincinnati Community Engagement Policy

INTRODUCTION

The City of Cincinnati is dedicated to engaging with members of the public to drive collaboration, trust, and transparency. We recognize the vast level of knowledge that community members have and celebrate their contributions to enhancing our mission and vision. We are devoted to providing a thoughtful and engaged approach to issues that are critical to community members and will commit time and resources to improving engagement practices.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Administrative Regulation (AR) is to embrace the directive of the Cincinnati City Council. It will establish a framework for clear and inclusive communication with the community, address historical disparities, and replace AR69 using the guidance provided by Ordinance number 0358-2021. Through this regulation, we are implementing a community engagement policy with supplemental resources and training opportunities for City staff, elected officials, and community members. The City seeks to ensure that all necessary parties within the City Administration, elected officials and staff, and outside stakeholders are proactively made aware of pending opportunities for engagement and understand the various collaborative roles played by impacted parties during the planning and implementation stages of engagement events. Each potential engagement opportunity will require detailed review of the context and intended impacts of proposed engagement activities, after which the necessary resources can be identified and allocated.

VISION

To be a thriving Cincinnati where all voices are empowered and engaged in shaping our shared future through transparency, collaboration, and access.

MISSION

To create fair and inclusive engagement practices that foster positive relationships and encourage meaningful connections between City staff and the public.

EQUITY STATEMENT

We are committed to fostering an environment of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in all aspects of our community engagement efforts. We recognize that equitable community engagement is fundamental to building trust, fostering collaboration, and achieving meaningful outcomes that benefit all members of our community.

RECONGINIZG HISTORY

We acknowledge that historical context is crucial to the engagement process. City leaders and staff will have opportunities to deepen their understanding of past policies and practices that have led to inequities and mistrust between community members and local government.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VALUES

Our community engagement efforts will be guided by the following values:

- **Inclusivity and Shared Right to Participation:** We will ensure that community members, representing various backgrounds, perspectives, and demographics, can participate in the decision-making process. We strongly believe individuals impacted by a decision hold a fundamental right to actively engage in problem-solving and decision-making.
- **Equity and Transparency:** We will recognize the unique needs of the community and address potential barriers impacting their ability to engage. We commit to transparency by providing clear and accessible information about government initiatives, decisions, and processes through open dialogue, accountability, and the documentation of outcomes.
- **Measurable Impact and Purposeful Action:** We commit to implementing engagement initiatives that have a tangible impact on the community while keeping community members informed throughout the process.

GOALS

- We will establish engagement practices that cement community engagement as an essential function of the City.
- We will incorporate community engagement into all stages of decision-making.
- We will employ various strategies to increase transparency and access to local government.
- We will foster a culture that encourages collaboration amongst City staff and community groups.
- We will uphold a community centered attitude where dialogue and relationship building between City staff and the public is welcomed and encouraged.

ACTIONS

The following is a list of actions that we will use to accomplish our City-wide goals.

- **Staff and Stakeholder Training:** We will provide training opportunities to educate City staff, elected officials and community members on engagement best practices.
- **Educational Resources:** We will provide opportunities for community members to learn and understand the City's functions and activities.
- **Department Champions:** We will establish a team of community engagement champions throughout City departments who will assist in sharing engagement standards with their respective departments.
- **Engaging on New Topics:** We will welcome opportunities to engage on existing and future topics of interest to the community and City staff.
- **Expanding our Reach:** We will exercise creative and innovative approaches to community engagement to expand our reach to individuals that have been traditionally excluded.
- **Developing and Maintaining Relationships:** We will adopt a community-first culture within the City. As a part of that, we will create and cultivate stronger relationships with all stakeholders.
- **Using Creative Engagement Methods:** We will use a variety of tools to diversify our engagement techniques.
- **Tracking:** We will establish and execute a tracking system that allows us to make informed decisions with data collected directly from community members.
- **Regular Updates:** We will share regular updates regarding community engagement efforts and how public input contributed to decision making.
- **Sharing Success:** We will share the success of City engagement efforts.

MEASUREMENTS

To measure engagement, we will implement and evaluate the following methods:

- **City Survey:** We will review public perceptions on engagement using the existing City-wide Community Perceptions survey.
- **Training Results:** We will track the number of training opportunities provided and who participated. We will measure the success of employee training by conducting a pre and post survey.
- **Demographic Measurements:** We will collect and analyze demographic data including but not limited to; race, ethnicity, preferred gender, household status, preferred language, neighborhood, and age-range.
- **Engagement Data Collection**: We will capture the engagement tools used by City departments, community insights on engagement initiatives, and the total number of City engagements per year.
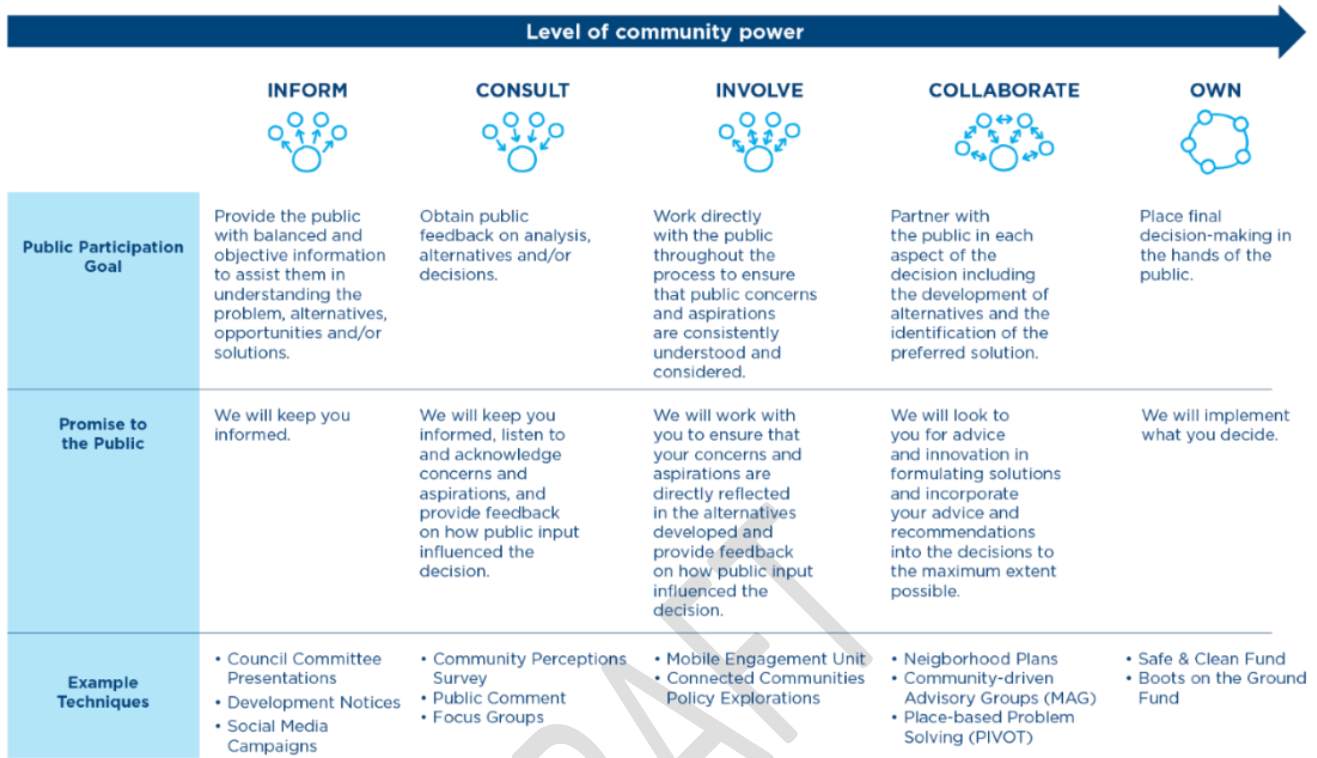
AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT

The City will proactively identify opportunities for engagement, determining the necessary parties within the City administration, elected officials and staff, and external stakeholders to move forward with planning and implementation as mandated by the particular context. This policy is designed to enhance the quality of community engagement initiatives across a broad spectrum of City-related activities that include but are not limited to:

- **Policymaking and Governance**
  - Developing and implementing local policies, ordinances, and regulations.
  - Overseeing the operation of local government departments and agencies.
  - Making decisions on local issues, such as taxation, public services, and public safety.
  - Ensuring compliance with state and federal laws.
- **Budget and Resource Allocation**
  - Developing and managing the City's budget.
  - Allocating resources to various City departments and programs.
  - Ensuring fiscal responsibility and accountability.
  - Monitoring revenues and expenditures to maintain financial stability.
- **Public Safety and Community Well-being**
  - Managing local law enforcement and emergency services.
  - Addressing public safety concerns, including crime prevention and response.
  - Promoting community health and well-being through programs and services.
  - Collaborating with social service agencies to support vulnerable populations.
- **Service Delivery and Improvements**
  - Providing essential municipal services such as water, sanitation, and public transportation.
  - Maintaining and improving infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and public buildings.
  - Managing public parks, recreational facilities, and cultural programs.
  - Addressing community needs for services and improvements.
- **City Planning and Development**
  - Managing urban development and growth.
  - Approving building permits and conducting inspections.
  - Collaborating with community councils to develop long-term neighborhood plans.
  - Managing the sale of City real estate.
  - Overseeing tax incentives.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Initiatives**
  - Developing and implementing policies and programs to protect the environment.
  - Promoting sustainable practices, such as renewable energy and waste reduction.
  - Addressing issues like air and water quality, conservation, and green infrastructure.
  - Encouraging community awareness and involvement in environmental matters.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

We will implement the City of Cincinnati's International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) spectrum for community engagement. IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to help select the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	OWN
Public Participation Goal	Provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the Public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example Techniques	• Council Committee Presentations • Development Notices • Social Media Campaigns	• Community Perceptions Survey • Public Comment • Focus Groups	• Mobile Engagement Unit • Connected Communities Policy Explorations	• Neigborhood Plans • Community-driven Advisory Groups (MAG) • Place-based Problem Solving (PIVOT)	• Safe & Clean Fund • Boots on the Ground Fund

Level of community power

ENGAGEMENT TRACKING

Engagement strategies will be tracked using a variety of data analysis tools. The City will handle all community engagement data responsibly and in accordance with applicable privacy laws.

Each department will self-report its engagement efforts via the selected platform throughout the fiscal year in accordance with all other performance analytics.

All engagements under the following criteria will be tracked:

- Engagements required by law
- Engagements regarding policy creation and/or amendments
- Engagements seeking public input on a proposed project
- Engagements that involve surveying or polling community members
- Engagements that support a specific community or neighborhood
- Engagement that **involves** or **collaborates** with community members

Additional data surrounding engagements is welcomed. We do not expect City staff to document daily interactions with the public. Other exclusions may apply.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

The City of Cincinnati values the contributions of all City employees and is committed to providing educational opportunities to expand professional reach and contributions to community-centered practices. As such, the City of Cincinnati will offer continuous support to staff in the form of a community engagement guide, employee training, and access to personnel who are dedicated to advancing and supporting community engagement efforts.

Community engagement resources are designed to equip City staff with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively inform, collaborate, and involve community members in local decision-making and initiatives. The Community Engagement Guide is an asset available to all staff members and will assist them in every step of the engagement process. Training opportunities aim to enhance engagement skills, strengthen relationships, and share resources to foster an inclusive, transparent, and responsive local government. Department leadership is responsible for ensuring staff receive training and stay current with engagement trends set forth by the City Manager's Office.

REGULAR REVIEW OF THE POLICY

The City of Cincinnati is committed to driving equitable, tangible results. City leaders and staff are held accountable for ensuring meaningful community engagement strategies are implemented throughout the City. We commit to providing the resources to ensure ongoing success. The City of Cincinnati will review the Community Engagement Policy bi-annually to assess the need for appropriate modifications.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were created through a collaborative process and include words that participating community members felt are critical to this policy and the future of community engagement in the City of Cincinnati.

Accessibility: Ensuring that resources, events, and community services are readily available and easily accessible to all individuals, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance. This includes removing obstacles, being transparent, and prioritizing user-friendly approaches to meet the needs of all individuals.

Capacity: The collective ability of a community to identify and address challenges, leverage resources, and drive progress. It encompasses factors such as leadership, skills, resources, and social capital.

Community Engagement: The proactive and intentional process of engaging community members in the decision-making process. This includes providing inclusive communication, meaningful participation and having an active presence within the community.

Community Member: An individual who lives, works or engages in the Cincinnati community.

Diversity: The recognition, celebration, and inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, perspectives, and demographics within a community.

Equity: The principle of fairness and inclusivity in decision-making processes and resource allocation within a community regardless of a person's background or circumstances

Inclusion: Ensuring that all individuals are welcomed, valued, and have shared power to fully participate in local government.

Intentionality: A purposeful approach to decision-making and actions, centered on the needs and perspectives of those most affected. It involves planning with clear goals, strategic thinking, and thoughtful consideration for the well-being of all individuals involved.

Transparency: The practice of openly and honestly sharing information, decisions, and processes. It includes clear communication, and a commitment to involving public participation in the decision-making process.

Trust: The confidence and belief that individuals, organizations, and communities will act in the collective interest, uphold commitments, and maintain open and honest communication.