

PLACEMAKING FOR DEMOCRACY:

# MUNICIPAL ACTION PACK



The project „Neighborhood Democracy in Urban Communities“ is implemented with financial support of € 160,000 provided by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism. The main goal of the „Neighborhood Democracy in Urban Communities“ project is to contribute to democracy in the community and to strengthen the democratic culture and civic consciousness at the community level.

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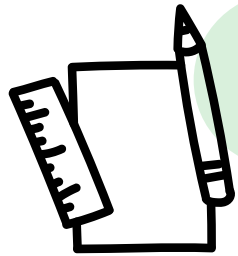
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# OVERALL OBJECTIVES

*This action pack aims to link municipal officials with community residents and activists in the development of public spaces, and as a result to:*



## Facilitate better solutions!

Decisions that the community are involved in are more sustainable in the long term because of less complaints and concerns that could arise late in the process and cause expensive delays and responses. Eventually, you don't end up with a reactive level of activism.

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## Have better relationships with citizens!

You can often cooperate with people that you disagree with, if you work on a defined task (like renovating a park).

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## OVERALL OBJECTIVES



## Lower costs

You can lower costs by getting more funding for what you do (for example from the EC) or with locals helping with money or materials!

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## Long term lower costs

In the long term you will use less resources to fix problems.

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# MAP OF THE MUNICIPAL ACTION PACK

STAGE I

Relationship building event

STAGE II

Internal reflection

## MAP OF THE MUNICIPAL ACTION PACK

STAGE III

Planning and implementation of community engagement process

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

STAGE IV

Follow up and evaluation

# STAGE I

## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING EVENT

### **STAGE DESCRIPTION:**

Use this first stage to start building trust with some of the people living in the area where you work, by putting on an informal event for people to gather and talk to each other.

### **GOALS:**

To meet people and talk about how you can support each other and work together to make the neighbourhood a better place.

### **KEY ACTORS TO REACH:**

Local residents, municipal actors from different departments.

### **ACTIVITIES/PURPOSE:**

Having informal, open, and positive dialogue with everyone that comes to the event.

### **TOOLS TO USE:**

Pop-up event

## STEP 1: PREPARATION OF THE POP-UP EVENT

### **DURATION:**

2 HOURS, start planning at least 10 days before the event date

### **BE CLEAR ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE EVENT:**

The idea is to meet local residents openly and in a friendly manner, to get to know each other and begin building mutual trust.

### **CONTACT STAFF:**

Try to get staff from a few different departments to come to the event.

### **MEETING WITH STAFF:**

Outline the goals of the event so that everyone is clear:

- We want to meet people who live in the community as neighbours. Approach everyone with the idea that you would like to get to know them as people, NOT that you are gathering information from them!
- When discussing local problems: Each individual person (residents, administrators, non-profits) should think about what they personally can do to make the neighbourhood better (not what others can do). The idea is that no one is blaming others for problems. Keep the message positive even when faced with criticism (for example say “that is a good point, what do you think that you could do to help us to tackle that problem?”)



## STEP 2: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING EVENT

### BEFORE THE EVENT:

- **Consider teaming up with other organizations** that are planning an event in the area.
- **Choose a place and a date/time where you are likely to meet a variety of people from the community:** This could be a school, park, or other public space. You could also plan to have a few pop-up events in different spaces in order to reach more people. Make sure that you consider accessibility issues and the needs of different groups in the community, such as seniors, youth, and those with disabilities.



- **Advertise the event!** Use social media, community newsletters, flyers, and signs.
- **Set up the space:** Make the space nonformal by using a 'Do-it-yourself' setup or a traditional meeting space for chatting with neighbours, set up in an informal style (for example cafe style). Have a budget for free drinks and snacks.
- **You can also prepare a couple of flipcharts for people to give you written feedback** or to suggest further ideas or activities. Remember to bring post-its, pens and something to hang up your posters

## STEP 3: DURING THE EVENT

### DURATION:

Approximately 3-4 hours

- Remind staff that **the goal is simply to meet residents and talk to them** as neighbours and friends!
- Try to talk to everyone and make sure that **everyone feels welcome by being approachable and friendly**, and greeting people with a smile. This can help to create a welcoming environment and put people at ease.
- **Listen actively** to what people have to say, and show that you are interested in their perspectives. This can help people feel heard and valued.
- **Avoid using technical or complex language** that may be confusing or intimidating to residents. Use clear, simple language that is easy to understand.
- **Ask open-ended questions** that allow people to express themselves freely and provide detailed feedback. This can help to encourage dialogue. Example: “What do you think are the best things about living here?” “What are the biggest challenges?”
- Use nonverbal communication, such as **nodding and maintaining eye contact**, to show that you are engaged in the conversation. This can help to build rapport and trust with residents.

- Provide context and background information on topics or issues at hand, if necessary. This can help residents better understand the situation and provide more informed feedback.
- Be respectful and considerate of people's perspectives and opinions, even if they differ from your own. **Avoid interrupting or dismissing people**, and show that you value their input.



## STEP 4: AFTER THE POP-UP EVENT

### AFTER THE EVENT

Gather the ideas/problems that have been discussed at the event. Discuss with staff.



### TRY TO IDENTIFY:

- Real needs
- Pressing problems
- New ideas/input
- Is there any 'low hanging fruit' (for example a situation where there is clear agreement about the problem between different actors)?
- Is there any previous experience tackling this problem?
- Are there existing, generally accepted solutions that it makes sense to try to tackle the problem with?
- If the problem or the challenge is broad, what are some of the smaller problems that the issue can be divided into?
- Are there any parts of the problem that the public can help to address?



# STAGE II

## INTERNAL REFLECTION

### **STAGE DESCRIPTION:**

Use this first step to reflect internally on your role as a municipal actor. Share your ideas and start working to build and maintain a culture of participation.

### **GOALS:**

To understand the current status and needs of the community and the municipality's responsibilities within it.

### **KEY ACTORS TO REACH:**

All internal staff.

### **ACTIVITIES/PURPOSE:**

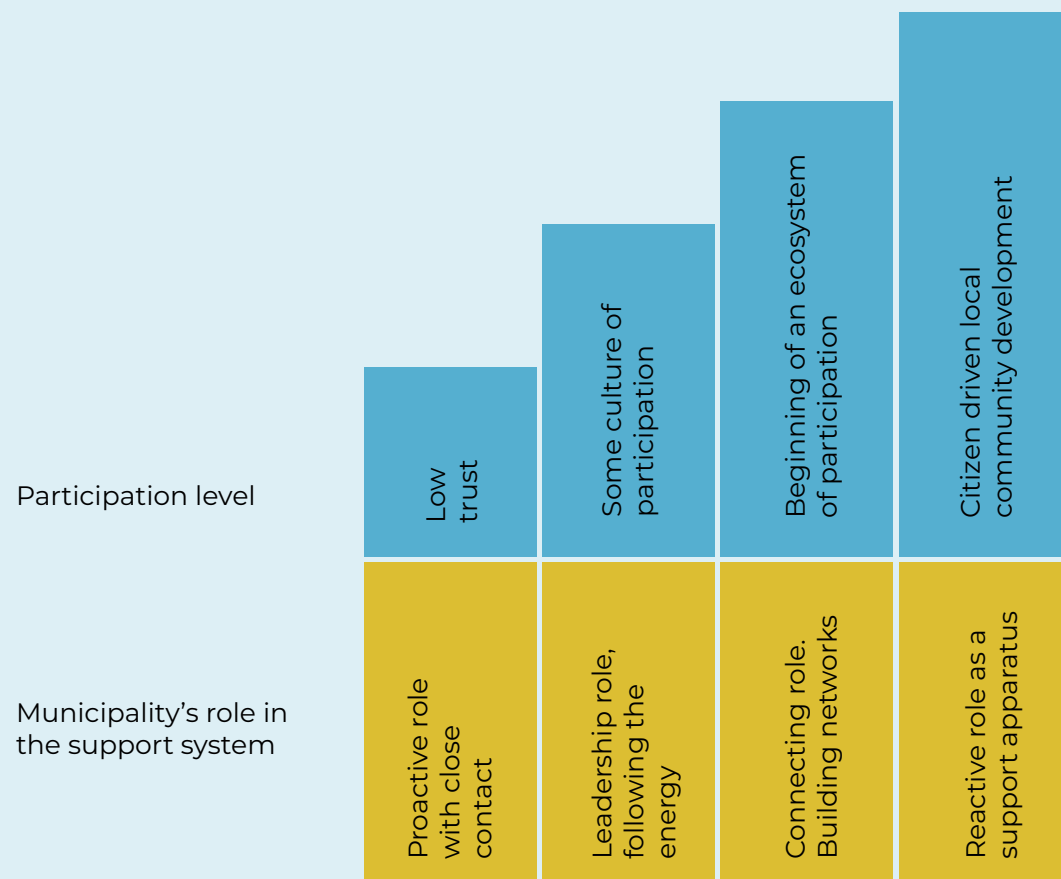
Meeting with all staff with the purpose of getting everyone on board with the principles of community engagement

### **TOOLS TO USE:**

One page information sheet.

# THE MAIN PRINCIPLES

- **Trust** the process
- **Give** away power
- **Accept** that you cannot know everything and you cannot do everything
- **Accept** that you don't know where this is going to end
- **Lead**, make people meet each other, let the initiatives come up by themselves



# STEP 1: ORGANIZE AN INTERNAL DISCUSSION

Think about whether the decision will affect the whole community or one sector of the community

Your decision will likely affect the whole community if it is deciding about:

- Strategic planning
- Elimination of a facility or service that serves the whole community (ie community centre)
- Proposed improvements to a community service, such as library or garbage collection
- Provision of a community wide event

Your decision or project will likely affect one sector of the community if:

- Will the project affect a specific neighbourhood in your district?
- Is there a strong possibility that the project will cause conflicting perspectives or the need for trade offs between or among particular groups in the neighbourhood?
- Is there a local organization that could ensure that the populations affected by the issue are given an adequate opportunity to offer their input?

## STEP 2: WORKSHEET – WHICH LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION DO WE NEED?

**Answer the following questions to get a score which will put you in one of the 3 levels of participation.**

Think first about your planned change or intervention, and who might be affected in order to answer the following questions.

Give 1 pt for no, 5 pts for maybe or unsure, and 10 pts for yes to the following questions:

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### 30 POINTS OR LESS

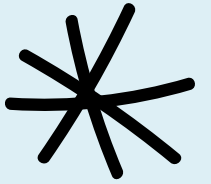
Level 1: low impact on the community

### 30-50 POINTS

Level 2: medium impact on the community

### 50 POINTS OR MORE

Level 3: high impact on the community



1. Does the affected population already have perceptions about the topic/issue?
2. Were there any past conflicts about the issue (ie have you had any complaints about this issue? Think about complaints that you have had recently or that came up in the information gathering event—are any of these related in some way to the issue or to its solution)?
3. Are there any health and safety risks?
4. Would the change affect property values?
5. Does the change create clear winners or losers?
6. Does the issue interfere with daily life or habits (by affecting accessibility, congestion, or creating restrictions)?
7. Does it create an aesthetic change (for example a change in view, odor, noise)?
8. Does the issue hit on any emotional or moral 'hot buttons'?
9. Other (add something that may not have been addressed above, but that you think is relevant to the magnitude of the issue).
10. Is there enough time for a participatory process?



# STAGE III

## IMPLEMENTATION

### **STAGE description:**

In this stage, you will plan how to conduct a public engagement process that fits the needs of your decision and community.

### **Goals:**

To connect with the community and build trust for working together on local challenges and decisions.

### **Key actors to reach:**

Residents.

### **Activities/purpose:**

To gather input from local people to be used in the municipal decision-making process, and to share the responsibility for community development.

### **TOOLS to use:**

Level 1, 2, or 3 public engagement tools.

## HOW THIS STAGE WORKS

Based on your results from the worksheet, you will now be given information on how to engage with people in the community.

### **30 points or less**

If you scored 30 points or less, you will conduct a light and quick public engagement process.

### **30 to 50 points**

If you scored 30 to 50 points, you will conduct a more involved public engagement process.

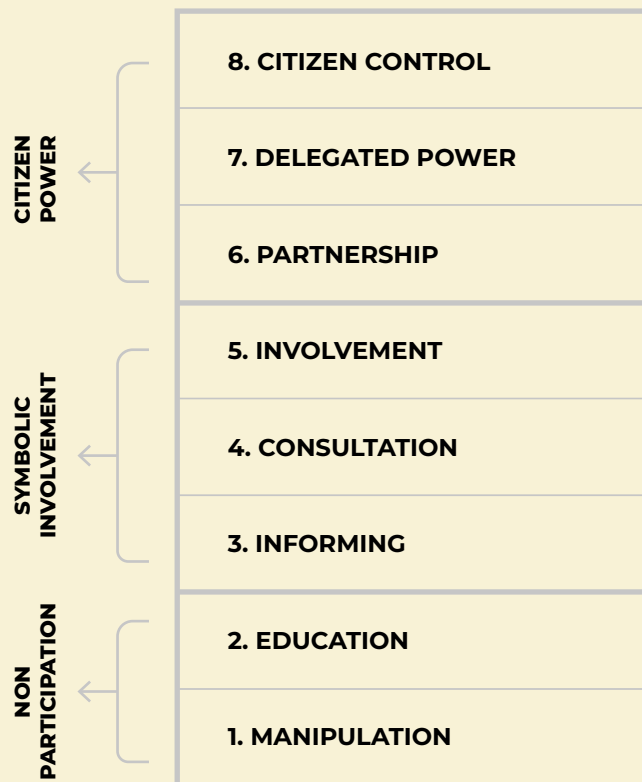
### **50 points or more**

If you scored 50 points or more, you will conduct a longer and more intense community engagement process.

## STEP 1: WHAT DO THE DIFFERENT LEVELS MEAN?

Now that you have a level of participation that you need to use to engage your community and know who you need to engage (the whole community or one group), let's look at what types of activities that you can do!

**For each level you need to think about:** What do you expect from involving citizens?



## STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

*Now that you have a level of participation that you need to use to engage your community and know who you need to engage (the whole community or one group), let's make a goal for the engagement process!*

### What is our main objective in involving citizens in the decision-making process?

Select one of the goals below, or choose your own goal based on your specific context. After the engagement process is completed, you will use these goals to determine success and identify challenges.

Be clear about the purpose of engagement and share this with participants!

## LEVEL 1 PROCESS

- Get inspiration from the public for a plan.
- Test a proposal.
- Adapt an original idea or solution to better fit local needs.

## LEVEL 2 PROCESS

- Integrate new ideas into a plan together.
- Enable citizens to monitor and evaluate processes.

## LEVEL 3 PROCESS

- Partner with participants to co-create solutions.
- Give stakeholders and citizens the possibility to decide on the use of public resources.

# STAGE III

## LEVEL 1

# PLAN A LEVEL 1 PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

**GOAL:**

Your goal in a Level 1 process of community engagement is to provide the public with information to help them to understand the problem and think about and possibly give you feedback on alternatives and solutions.

**PROMISE:**

Your promise to the public in a Level 1 process:

*“We will keep you informed,”*

*“We will listen to your concerns,”*

*“We will give you feedback on how or if your input influenced the final decision.”*

- Level 1

**LESS THAN 30 POINTS:**

The sooner people are informed of a change, the less likely they are to feel in conflict with the municipality.

**DO A COMBINATION OF:**

- Public discussion
- Website notice
- Fact sheets
- Direct mails
- Staff briefing on messaging
- Posters
- Social media posts
- Ideas contest
- Open house event
- Surveys

**EXAMPLE:**

Several large trees have to be removed from a boulevard (Note: emotions could make this a Level 2 process).

**RESPONSE:**

Provide advance notice to citizens through posters in the area. Put a link to your webpage that explains the process in more detail on any flyers or posters. Personal contact with affected citizens is recommended! Staff should be prepared to spend time talking to neighbours and/or gather input through surveys, and to explain why removal is necessary (and best) at this time!

Identify and brief any active citizens or online groups who care about this area. Make a flyer or web post after your final decision has been made to explain how the public input was used.



# STAGE III

## LEVEL 2

# PLAN OF ACTION FOR LEVEL 2

- Level 1
- Level 2
- Level 3

**GOAL:**

The goal of a level 2 process is to work directly with the public throughout the process to make sure that their concerns are consistently understood and considered.

**PROMISE:**

Your promise to the public in a level 2 process:

*“We will work with you,”*

*“Your concerns will be reflected in the developed solutions,”*

*“We will provide feedback on how your input influenced the final decisions.”*

**TIMELINE:**

Begin a level to process by planning a timeline for the process, and promoting the event (use the tools from level 1 to promote)

- Level 2

**30-50 POINTS:**

There are a wide variety of situations where a level 1 approach will be inadequate, but a level 3 process would be “overkill.”

**WHOLE COMMUNITY IDEAS:**

- Workshop
- Survey
- Public meeting
- Online forum



## Level 2

**EXAMPLE:**

Installing a new youth club. This affects the whole community and raises concerns about costs and nuisance factors.

**RESPONSE:**

Set one municipal official with the responsibility to engage in person with the public early on about the issue.

At the same time, notify residents that may be affected through a variety of channels, and publish a timeline for input and decision making. Organize an open public meeting to foster two-way communication and create direct links between the different groups working on the project and the local residents.

At the meeting, share relevant information and try to address concerns through adjustments to the project timing, location, size, or methods. Make a flyer or web post after your final decision has been made to explain how the public input was used.

# STAGE III

## LEVEL 3

# PLAN OF ACTION FOR LEVEL 3

## GOAL:

The goal of a level 3 process is to partner with the public in each step of the decision-making process or, in certain cases, even to place decision-making power in the hands of the public.

## PROMISE:

Your promise to the public in a level 3 process:

*“We will get direct advice from you,” “Together with you we will incorporate this advice into the decisions that we make,” “We will implement only what we decide together.”*

## TIMELINE:

Begin a level 3 process by planning a timeline that fits with the decision-making process, and promoting the event (use the tools from level 1 to promote). A deliberative process requires several months to get stakeholders and decision makers on board, and several months of learning and deliberation of participants!

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 3

## 50 POINTS OR MORE:

For some situations, a full commitment to public input is essential to success. These situations require good process, a committed municipal team, a consultation plan and a budget.

## WHOLE COMMUNITY IDEAS:

- World Cafe style workshop
- Citizens' assembly
- Citizen advisory committee



Level 3

**EXAMPLE:**

Change in transportation affecting established neighbourhoods: This affects the whole community and raises concerns about direct impacts on lifestyle and habits, potential property value changes, and concerns about fairness.

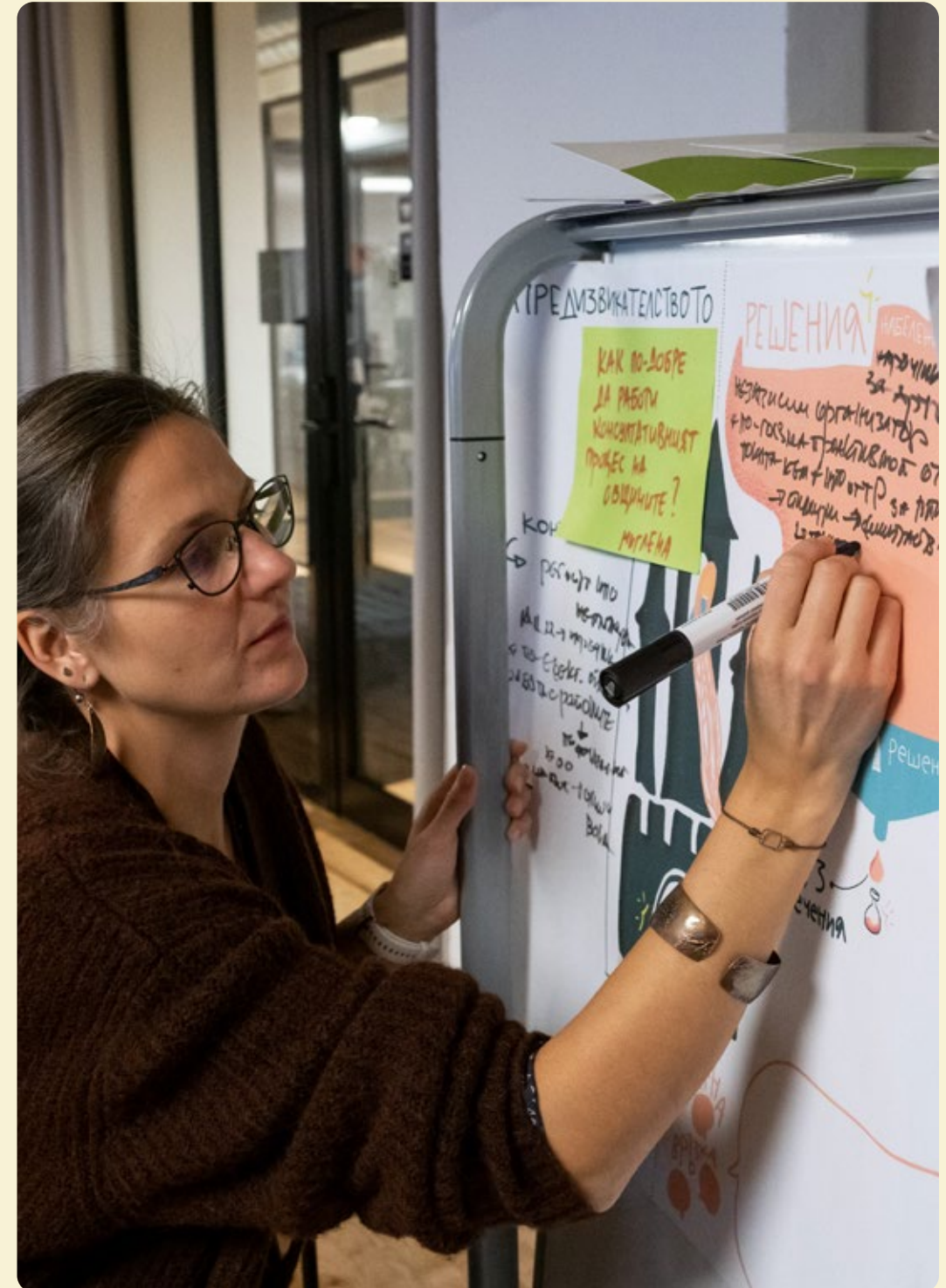
**RESPONSE:**

Invite the public to a [World Cafe style workshop](#) to discuss the change and possible solutions. Seating is at cafe style tables (i.e. in smaller groups). Questions are prepared in advance by the municipality (eg. What positive and negative long-term effects result from the change?).

In a World Cafe workshop, it is important to encourage everyone to contribute their ideas and perspectives and to move between tables. As participants carry key ideas or themes to new tables, they exchange perspectives.

Encourage people to listen openly, and reflect on the patterns, themes and deeper questions experienced in the conversations.

Level 3



# STAGE IV

## FOLLOW UP AND EVALUATE THE PROCESS

### **STAGE DESCRIPTION:**

Use this final step to evaluate the participatory process and then to follow up with residents on the next steps.

### **GOALS:**

To determine whether the participatory process was successful, to reevaluate the process for next time, and to continue the dialogue with residents.

### **KEY ACTORS TO REACH:**

Internal staff and local residents.

### **ACTIVITIES/PURPOSE:**

Internal evaluation of the process to assess challenges and successes, and external follow up to enable input on the process itself.

### **TOOLS TO USE:**

[Measuring](#) your impacts and sharing your impacts tools.



## STEP 1: INTERNAL EVALUATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Meet internally with staff to reflect on the participatory process that you completed. Go through the questions below:

- **Review your main goal for the engagement process.** Were you able to complete the process in line with this goal? What were some challenges that you faced in working towards this goal?
- **What type(s) of inputs or contributions did you receive from participants?** Did you receive more positive or negative feedback? Could you adapt your process to change the amount of positive or negative feedback that you receive in the future?



- **How did you use these inputs to solve your problem?** Write up clearly how the public input was used in decision-making, so that you can share this with the public in the next step (follow up).
- **What can be done to make organising citizen participation processes easier in the future?** Can this process be institutionalised to make participation a habit?

## STEP 2: FOLLOW UP OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS



**Ensure** all input received is analyzed and summarized. This may require some time editing and refining.

**Brief** the project team as soon as possible and inform those responsible for the project of any concerns that might affect their planning, design or implementation.

**Review** and summarize evaluations. Document any advice for future meetings.

**Report** back to those who have taken the time to participate. This may take the form of an email update, newsletter, and or social media status update. Make sure that they can see the input that the municipality has received.

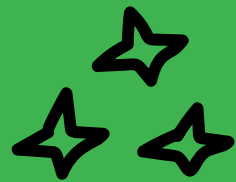
**Connect** the decision to the input and be open about the final decision making process. In your summary, explain the process and the rationale behind final decisions that were made. Note where the decision is a direct response to the input received. Explain why, if the decision does not reflect the majority preferences of participants. Be prepared to explain why some ideas could not be supported.

**Verify** that you have interpreted the public input correctly. This means some (or all) participants have the opportunity to review your draft to verify it is accurate.

**Update** your website and social media accounts to show the current stage in the process, decisions made, and upcoming opportunities to provide input. Don't forget to upload new or updated reports.



AFTER  
YOU FINISH:  
**CONTINUE THE  
DIALOGUE**



CONGRATULATIONS!  
**YOU HAVE IMPLEMENTED  
A PARTICIPATORY  
PROCESS!**



## REFERENCES:

[IAP2 Federation – P2 Pillars.pdf](#)  
([ymaws.com](#))

[Citizen participation: Why and when to involve citizens? | OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes | OECD iLibrary](#)  
([oecd-ilibrary.org](#))

[Public Input Toolkit](#)  
([www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca](#))

[Community Engagement Toolkit](#)  
([sparc.bc.ca](#))

[Methods](#)  
([involve.org.uk](#))