HOW TO CONDUCT A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MEETING

To host an effective meeting, it's important to think about the objectives, the flow, and the anticipated outcomes for the meeting:

Determine the purpose of the meeting

- What are the main objectives of the meeting?
- What is the agenda for the meeting?
- What do you want to take away from the meeting?
- What are the next steps following the meeting?

The answers to these questions will be important to communicate to the attendees both prior to the meeting, during the meeting, and following the meeting.

Ensure that you have the right people in the room to contribute to a productive conversation

If your goal is to understand more about what the needs of your community are and what types of projects your community should pursue, make sure you have a diverse group of stakeholders in the room ranging from small business owners, young professionals, and non-profit leaders to local government leaders, education leaders, healthcare providers, and more.

Let everyone introduce themselves when the meeting starts to build the collaborative spirit.

Make sure to spread the word about the event through communication channels such as email, social media, local media, flyers, or signage in public places.

Select the appropriate time for the meeting to maximize participation

For most working professionals, a meeting during the workday might be difficult to attend. Be strategic when you are holding your meeting to ensure you are maximizing your target participants.

Identify the meeting facilitator

It's important to identify beforehand who can lead and facilitate the discussion, and ensure the facilitator listens with a neutral stance to invite ideas from all attendees without offering their own opinions, as well as having someone available who can answer questions on upcoming projects or plans, if applicable.

Give attendees the opportunity to provide feedback following the meeting

Recognizing that some participants may not want to speak during the meeting, it's always good to provide an opportunity for attendees to give feedback following the meeting, whether that's through comment cards, an online form, or a contact email.

OTHER FAQs:

Q: Where should I host?

A: Public venue that allows for a good number of people. Not too large, not too small.

Some ideas for meeting spaces could include:

- Public libraries
- Local cafés or community centers
- Local municipality buildings

Q: Should I provide refreshments?

A: It's always a nice gesture to provide refreshments, especially if your event is during a mealtime. Consider providing pastries or snacks from a local coffee shop, bakery, or restaurant to support your community. Sometimes local businesses offer to donate refreshments if they know the purpose of the meeting.

Q: Do I need a presentation?

A: If there are existing plans and ideas that would be helpful to discuss, a presentation could invite productive discussion. If you are starting from scratch, prompt questions from the Community Self-Assessment Facilitation Guide can help generate ideas and discussion.