



Connecting with Residents Through Opportunity Neighborhoods



- Since first established in 2011, ON has **successfully engaged residents of diverse communities**, lifting the voices of often underrepresented groups.
- ON communities have become a focus for those interested in community outreach and engagement.
- The potential for connecting through ON networks **will only grow** as the framework expands to new communities.



Involving ON residents in the work that affects them, their families, and their neighbors is an essential part of **collective impact**. It also can be an important part of your overall plan to make a sustainable and measurable difference.

A successful collaboration requires several commitments on your part.

- Commitment to **respecting residents and their time.**
- Commitment to **ensuring your initiative will benefit residents and their community.**
- Commitment to **informing residents of progress and results throughout your engagement.**
- Commitment to **capturing the voices of residents in traditionally underserved communities of Fairfax County.**

This guide highlights important considerations and provides resources that can help make sure your collaboration with residents in ONs is mutually beneficial, equitable, and productive.

For general information about Opportunity Neighborhoods, visit <http://bit.ly/OpportunityNeighborhood>.

Initial Considerations for Connecting with Residents

Areas of Consideration as You Begin Your Initiative

- **Background and Context**
- **Trauma-Informed Lens**
- **Equity Lens**

Background and Context

- Who is the contact person for the lead non-profit (backbone partner) in the Opportunity Neighborhood(s)?
- Can you clearly and simply state why your initiative is worth participants' time and effort?
- How does your planned initiative align with or improve on other initiatives ON residents may have supported to “move the needle”?
- What are best practices related to your issue or initiative, and who are the local subject matter experts that can advise you?

Background and Context *(continued)*

- Are there established coalitions or groups with whom you could connect and partner, rather than creating a new coalition, initiative, or event?
- What is the expected time commitment for residents who participate?
- How will you keep participants informed throughout the process, including reporting back on the outcomes of the initiative?

Trauma-Informed Lens

- If you are holding an in-person gathering, does the setting and culture of the meeting or event use a trauma-informed approach?
- Will the desired participants feel safe, welcome, respected, and included?
- If the content of your initiative could be stressful or triggering for participants, have you planned for qualified support staff to be present?
- How can you make your location more welcoming, inclusive, and trauma-informed?

Visit Fairfax County's Trauma-Informed Community Network site for more considerations related to trauma, including guidance on creating trauma-informed spaces.

<http://bit.ly/fairfaxTICN>

Equity Lens

- What are the demographics of residents who will be affected?
- Which groups of people are more vulnerable to changes?
- Which groups of people are historically less likely to participate in engagement? Which groups of people are usually overrepresented in public/civic engagement processes?
- Are you aware of the history that specific populations or racial/ethnic groups may have with your organization or initiative? Are you prepared to hear and address concerns that arise?
- Is in-person attendance essential for participation? Can you meet residents where they are?

Equity Lens (continued)

- Can meetings or events be held in a location closer, more accessible, and/or more welcoming to the desired participants, or can they be held in multiple locations?
- Will all activities be explained clearly and simply for all participants, including using translation/interpretation tools where needed?
- How will you fund and handle logistics for identified barriers to participation, such as transportation, child care, accessibility, language/interpreters, refreshments, etc.?

Visit One Fairfax for more guidance on equity considerations.

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/topics/one-fairfax

Establishing Your Plan to Connect with Opportunity Neighborhoods

Useful Resources

Once you have decided to pursue engagement through Opportunity Neighborhoods Many useful resources can provide guidance for effective public engagement, outreach, and participation.

Community Engagement Toolkit

Collective Impact Forum, available at:

<http://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Community%20Engagement%20Toolkit.pdf>

Engagement Toolbox

Penn State College of Agriculture Science Center for Economic and Community Development's, available at:

<https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox/engagement/core-principles-of-community-engagement>

- Engagement through Opportunity Neighborhoods is done primarily by staff who are trained in facilitating effective public participation.
- Training equips facilitators with skills and resources that help them engage people along a continuum of participation; see the *Spectrum of Public Participation*.
- Adhering to best practices, like those developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), helps make sure residents can meaningfully participate in work that affects them and their community.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Inform



Consult



Involve



Collaborate



Empower



Public Participation Goal

To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions

To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions

To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered

To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution

To 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

Fact sheets
Websites
Open houses

Public comment
Focus groups
Surveys
Public meetings

Workshops
Deliberative polling

Citizen advisory committees
Consensus-building
Participatory decision-making

Citizen juries
Ballots
Delegated decisions

Working with ON Leads

Each Opportunity Neighborhood has a “backbone” non-profit that leads the ON initiative within that community.

ON leads can:

- Provide useful information about priorities identified by the community’s residents.
- Work with you to find the best fit for a collaboration

What Determines the Best Type of Collaboration?

The best fit will depend on:

- Answers to *Initial Considerations*
- Scope of your initiative
- Resources/funding available to address barriers to participation.

ON leads for the backbone non-profit, Fairfax County, and FCPS work together to field and respond to requests to engage through ON networks. They also make sure that opportunities for residents, including Neighborhood Ambassadors, to be heard on county-wide issues are equitable across ONs, and that residents are supported and equipped to participate in ways that are meaningful and productive for their own community's priorities.

When resources or capacity are limited, ON staff and partners will evaluate requests to support planning and logistics on a case by case basis depending on the mission and scope of your initiative. However, the decision to take part in any engagement initiative ultimately rests with each resident.

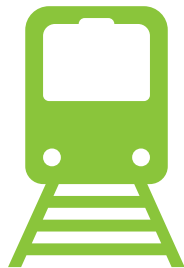
Planning Ahead

Funding for transportation, child care, and interpreters to allow residents to take part in local efforts is essential and **must be arranged by the organizer of the event or initiative.**

Common Barriers to Meaningful Participation

- Transportation
- Language
- Child care
- Food
- Accessibility
- Incidental Costs

Transportation



- Provide Uber **gift cards**
- **Gas cards**
- **Payments** for taxis to cover the costs of getting to an event

Rides across the county to attend meetings can cost \$50 or more

Language



Arrange **one-on-one** interpreters or individual **in-ear translation equipment**

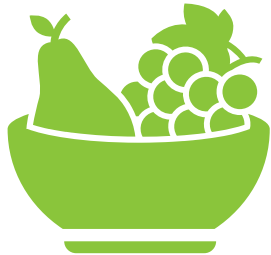
Some participants may require one-on-one help to understand what is being translated

Child care



- Offer quality **onsite** child care
- Provide funds to pay an **in-home provider**, for the duration of transit and meeting/event time

Food



At meal times:

Offer **healthy food** that takes into consideration relevant cultural or religious preferences

Other times:

Offer **light refreshments**

Accessibility

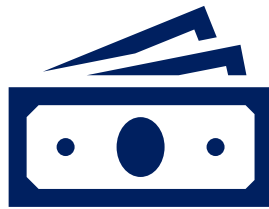


- Be sure participants using mobility aids such as scooters, wheelchairs, and walkers have **enough room move around safely**
- Provide accommodations for individuals who have **visual or hearing disabilities**

Visit www.adahospitality.org
for more information

Help to cover other incidental costs

Many of our partners offer **grocery store** or other **gift cards** for participants, as a show of gratitude and to lessen the financial burden of participating.



Core Principles of Engagement

Careful Planning and Preparation

Through adequate and inclusive planning, ensure that the design, organization, and convening of the process serve both a clearly defined purpose and the needs of the participants.

Inclusion and Demographic Diversity

Equitably incorporate diverse people, voices, ideas, and information to lay the groundwork for quality outcomes and democratic legitimacy.

Collaboration and Shared Purpose

Support and encourage participants, government and community institutions, and others to work together to advance the common good.

Openness and Learning

Help all involved listen to each other, explore new ideas unconstrained by predetermined outcomes, learn and apply information in ways that generate new options, and rigorously evaluate public engagement activities for effectiveness.

Transparency and Trust

Be clear and open about the process, and provide a public record of the organizers, sponsors, outcomes, and range of views and ideas expressed.

Impact and Action

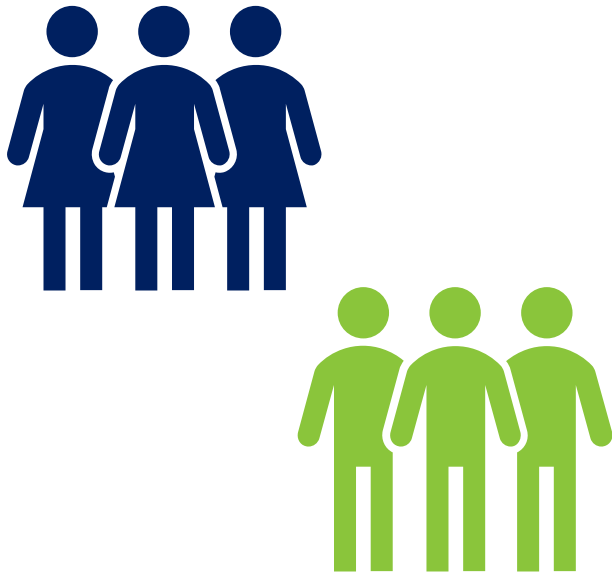
Ensure each participatory effort has real potential to make a difference, and that participants are aware of that potential.

Sustained Engagement and Participatory Culture

Promote a culture of participation with programs and institutions that support ongoing quality public engagement.

Source: National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) <http://ncdd.org/rc/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/PEPfinal-expanded.pdf>

Neighborhood Ambassadors



Each established ON has several identified Neighborhood Ambassadors who may be able to take part in your initiative or event, respond to surveys, or participate in a focus group. These individuals are residents of their Opportunity Neighborhood who have expressed an interest in volunteering in the areas of community organizing, advocacy, and engagement.

Neighborhood Ambassadors have a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and skills that increase the capacity of the ON team and extend their reach into the community. They have completed specialized training to help set priorities in the ON, represent their community and family in ON meetings, share information about resources, and help connect partners to ongoing work in the focal areas.

Types of Engagement

Engaging with ON residents can happen in many different settings. The setting you chose will depend on the goal of your engagement.



Common Types of Engagement

Open houses

One way to inform community members by providing balanced and objective information and to increase their awareness and understanding of a problem or initiative.

Focus groups

Meetings used to gather information and ask for advice from residents to better inform the work. In some cases, ON leads may be able to work with you to conduct a focus group with already established community councils or working teams.

Public forums

A way to increase awareness of an issue or proposal across a wide audience. They also let organizers gather feedback from residents and groups who may be affected by an initiative.

Round tables

Facilitated conversations focused on a project or policy. The goal of a round table is to foster open *and* honest conversations between neighbors outside of a formal setting. The sessions are designed to help participants share perspectives, including hopes and concerns, with each other.

Common Types of Engagement (continued)

Story circles

Gatherings that allow community members to share diverse stories, experiences, and ideas. Story circles are centered on a predetermined theme.

Visioning workshops

An opportunity for coordinators and residents to work together to create a vision for the future. By holding a vision workshop, organizers show their commitment to ensuring public concerns and aspirations are understood and considered throughout an initiative.

Charettes

Intensive workshops focused on the design of a service or project with an emphasis on decision-making and the benefit of giving immediate feedback to organizers and project designers.

Advisory committees

Residents have a seat at the table to give feedback and advice on changes to programs, policies, or plans, and organizers promise to incorporate recommendations as fully as possible.

Conducting Research in Opportunity Neighborhoods

Anyone wishing to engage in research and/or evaluation through the Opportunity Neighborhoods network should contact the ON lead in the targeted community. Researchers are expected to comply with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements and adhere to the Basic Principles of Human Subject Research (respect, beneficence, and justice) and understand and plan for working with potentially vulnerable populations.

More information about conducting research in ONs is available upon request. Researchers should be aware that there are many valuable ways to engage community members in the various stages of the research process, from initial outreach and engagement, recruitment, data collection, data analysis, to final reporting findings, and decision-making that drives to action in or for that community.

Thank you for your commitment to meaningful and sustainable collaboration with residents and community partners.

We hope you find this guide helpful, and we look forward to working with you to bring opportunity to youth and families in our communities.