



A Framework for Inclusive Community Engagement in Fairfax County

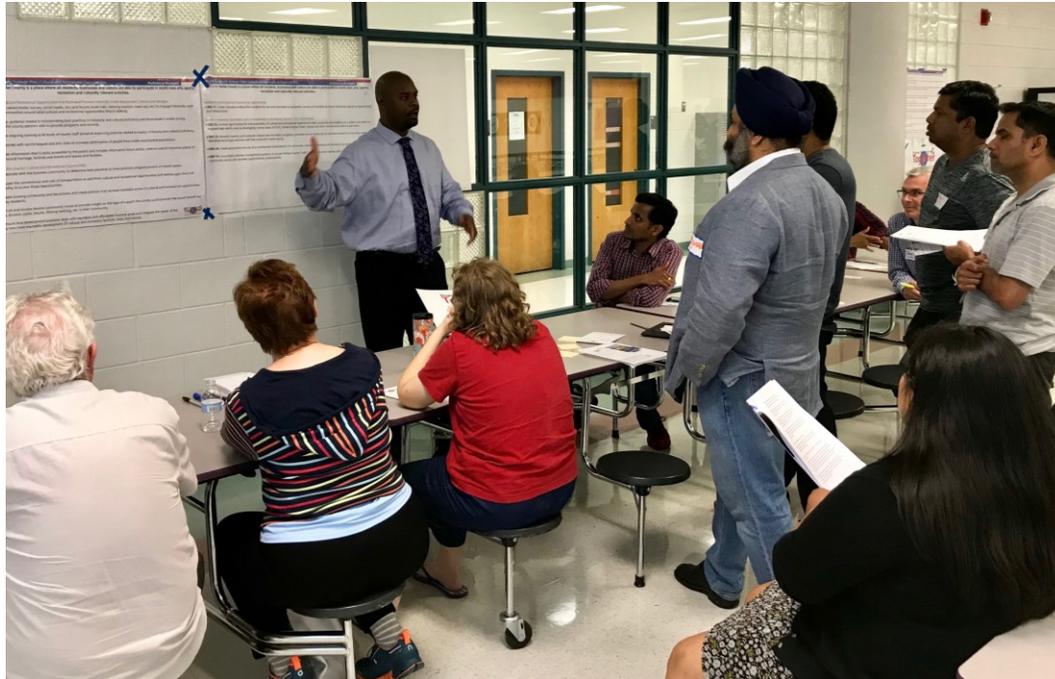
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Land Use Policy Committee
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Engagement in Fairfax County



Community engagement has always been an important hallmark and experience in Fairfax County.

Who Participates and Who Decides in Fairfax County?



Moving Away From:

Positions: People digging into narrow representations of what they want.

The Usual Suspects: Participants who represent a small segment of the total stakeholder community.

Argument: People seeking to get to get their individual way.

Buy-in People seeking to convince others to adopt their decision.

Events: People getting one shot at a decision.



Moving Toward:

Values: People forging common ground and envisioning solutions that meet a variety of needs.

A Full Spectrum of Stakeholder Voices: Ensuring a balanced understanding of community values, interests and concerns.

Dialog: People seeking to understand each other.

Real Input: Input which can be used to help shape decisions.

Processes: Input integrated into decision-making and putting everyone on a shared learning curve.



Key Reasons to Enhance Engagement Efforts

Provide historically overlooked voices a seat at the table.

Amid a pandemic, government requires new engagement approaches.

Engagement is more than a survey; requires building long-term relationships.

Better outcomes for residents and stakeholders.

Greater ownership in community decisions.

What is Inclusive Community Engagement?

From One Fairfax Policy:

“To foster civil discourse and dialogue, community engagement shall ensure that the breadth of interests, ideas, and values of all people are heard and considered. Outreach and public participation processes will be inclusive of diverse races, cultures, ages and other social statuses.

Effective listening, transparency, flexibility and adaptability will be utilized to overcome barriers that prevent or limit participation in public processes.”





Benefits of a Consistent Approach to Engagement

Framework provides a direction for improving our current community engagement practices. It enables departments to continue effective strategies while integrating inclusive community engagement concepts to expand and deepen participation.

Ensures stakeholders have fair and equal access regardless of the host department.

Raises awareness and collaboration among departments so we avoid duplicative or dueling engagement – more coordination.

Supports engagement through countywide, centralized functions to provide guidance, tools, networks, data analysis and more capacity.



DRAFT Core Principles of Fairfax County Engagement

- 1. PRIORITIZE EQUITY** – In prioritizing equity, it is critical that we acknowledge intentional and unintentional inequities as we move toward a more inclusive engagement process.
- 2. ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN TRUST** – Work with communities in an honest and transparent manner, considering and respecting history, culture and trauma.
- 3. DEVELOP DATA-DRIVEN PROCESSES** – Equip staff and residents to utilize data to inform all aspects of the engagement process.
- 4. ESTABLISH CLEAR EXPECTATIONS** – Develop clear and transparent processes to achieve expected outcomes for the community. Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities.
- 5. ENABLE ENGAGED COMMUNICATIONS** – Communicate clearly and openly for meaningful public input, broad community participation, and engagement in the decision-making process.
- 6. PROMOTE AND CREATE ACCESSIBLE GOVERNMENT** – Collaborate with the community to ensure public engagement processes are broadly accessible to all members of the public to promote meaningful participation.

Fairfax County Community Engagement Spectrum

CORE PRINCIPLES: Equitable Trusted Data-Driven Meaningful Transparent Accessible

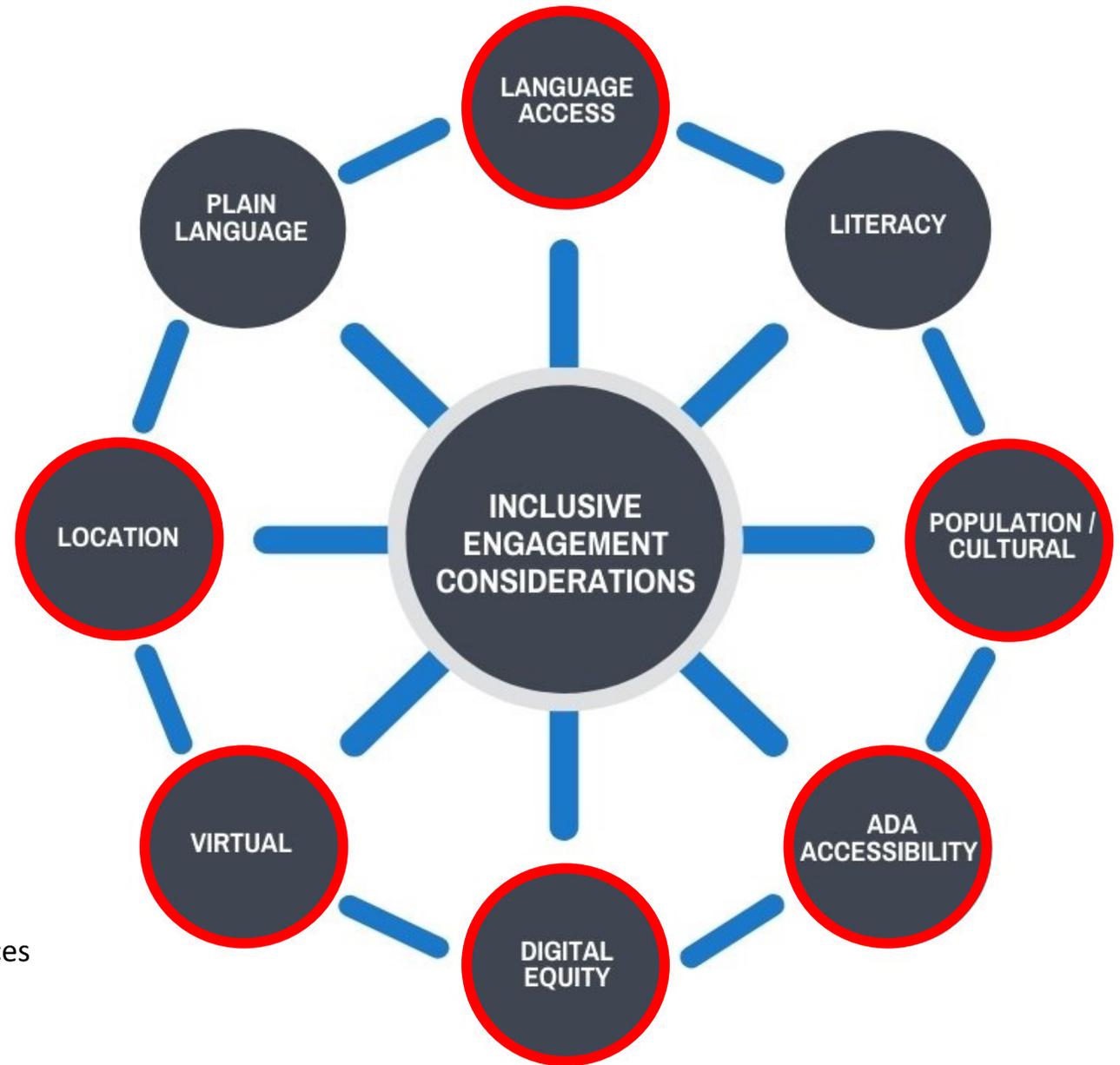
Engage

The county's commitment to the community is to be clear about the level of engagement expected for decisions.

Various relationships, capacity building, community outreach, communications and marketing happen constantly and concurrently to support the engagement levels noted to the right.



What Makes Engagement “Inclusive”



= Will require additional infrastructure and resources



Next Steps

- ✓ **Develop implementation plan, including measuring impact.**

- ✓ **Budget requests for centralized engagement support, including:**
 - ✓ Robust countywide online engagement platform (Parks and DPD have been piloting)
 - ✓ Expanded language access support

- ✓ **Continue building engagement culture, including:**
 - ✓ Pilot framework for the Strategic Plan, Mount Vernon Athletic Club, etc.
 - ✓ Department Equity Impact Plans include engagement goals/strategies
 - ✓ Develop countywide training
 - ✓ Leverage GIS and other tools

- ✓ **Continue to listen, refine and adapt framework and approach.**

