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Clackamas County

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CLACKAMAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Policy Session Worksheet

Presentation Date: **June 10, 2026** **Approx. Start Time:** 11:15AM **Approx. Length:** 45 mins

Presentation Title: Strategic Communication and Community Engagement Plans

Department: Public and Government Affairs

Presenters: Tonia Holowetzki, Director

WHAT ACTION ARE YOU REQUESTING FROM THE BOARD?

Informational session only on potential Strategic Communication and Community Engagement plans, including the community engagement framework.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Strategic Communication Plan

Clackamas County's 2026 Strategic Communication Plan shifts the county from a reactive communication model to a proactive engagement strategy. This new approach aligns all public messaging with the Board of County Commissioners' five core priorities for 2025–2030. Guided by the values of transparency, unified storytelling, and active community relationship-building, the framework is designed to foster a reliable, two-way dialogue between county officials and the residents they serve.

To put these priorities into practice, the plan relies on three core communication strategies: (1) maintaining a consistent narrative, (2) establishing continuous feedback loops, and (3) ensuring crisis preparedness. Execution is guided by a risk assessment matrix that tailors the county's approach to the nature of the situation. Routine updates focus on delivering clear data through digital channels; sensitive topics rely on transparent public meetings and town halls; and highly controversial matters prompt proactive narrative framing through media interviews and direct outreach.

Progress under the new plan is monitored through a combination of digital dashboards and annual public surveys or focus groups. The county measures overall success across three distinct performance metrics: (1) public awareness, (2) public trust, and (3) active engagement.

Strategic Engagement Plan

Clackamas County's strategic community engagement framework serves as a roadmap for fostering trust, transparency, and collaboration through consistent public participation. To ensure county programs meet local needs, the framework draws on several established community programs. These include advisory boards and commissions (ABCs), which provide the Board of County Commissioners with lived and professional expertise; community planning organizations (CPOs), which facilitate independent community dialogue and feedback on land-use decisions; and hamlets and villages, which serve as extensions of county leadership to bridge communication gaps in unincorporated regions.

To expand its reach, the county is introducing new initiatives that focus heavily on younger residents and volunteer appreciation. The Youth Engagement Program offers 8th–12th graders micro-volunteering and leadership opportunities, while a new Internship Program introduces young adults to public service. Additionally, the Volunteer Recognition Program celebrates service and builds civic pride. These programs may be complemented by recurring public events, including regular town halls for open dialogue, an annual CPO Roundtable, the annual State of the County update, and biennial community focus groups that gather targeted feedback on community concerns.

Behind the scenes, the county ensures the quality and continuity of these efforts through data-driven best practices and centralized resources. Engagement performance indicators (EPIs) track effectiveness and keep efforts people-centered, while a staff-led community of practice enables internal teams to share strategies and maintain consistency. Finally, the Engage Clackamas public webpage serves as a centralized online hub, making it easy for residents to access surveys, polls, events, and volunteer opportunities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (current year and ongoing):

Is this item in your current budget? ☐ YES X☐ NO

What is the cost? $8,000 - $12,000 annually.

The projected cost was calculated by estimating approximately 900 volunteers currently engaged with the county through its various legacy programs and approximately 100 students through its newly established youth programs. At an annual cost of $8 - $12 per volunteer, this projects a total cost between $8,000 - $12,000 annually, which would include all expenses for the three new programs: youth engagement and internship programs, and the volunteer recognition program.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

- How does this item align with your Department's Strategic Business Plan goals? This is directly aligned with PGA's core products and services through our Communication and Community Engagement business line.

- How does this item align with the County's Performance Clackamas goals? These deliverables are directly tied to the BCC's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and its strategic priority, Public Trust in Good Government: Communications and Engagement.

LEGAL/POLICY REQUIREMENTS:

PUBLIC/GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION:

OPTIONS:
N/A, Informational only session.

RECOMMENDATION:
N/A, Informational only session.

ATTACHMENTS:
A. Strategic Communication Plan
B. Strategic Engagement Plan and Community Engagement Framework

SUBMITTED BY: Tonia Holowetzki, PGA Director
Division Director/Head Approval _____
Department Director/Head Approval T. Holowetzki
County Administrator Approval _____

For information on this issue or copies of attachments, please contact _____@ 503-_____

Attachment A

Strategic Communication Plan

2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3
Introduction 5
BCC Priorities 5
Situation Analysis 5
Targeted Audiences 7
Guiding Communication Principles 8
Reach and Channels 8
  Overarching Communication Strategies 8
Evaluation Plan 10
Conclusion 10
Appendix A. Clackamas County Performance Clackamas Strategic Plan 2025-2030 11
Appendix B. Communication Messages 12
  Priority: Safe, Secure, and Livable Communities 12
  Priority: Vibrant Economy 12
  Priority: Strong Infrastructure 12
  Priority: Healthy People – Recovery Campus 12
  Priority: Public Trust in Good Government 13
Appendix C. Evaluation Plan 14

Executive Summary

The **2026 Strategic Communication Plan** represents Clackamas County's first formal effort to move from reactive to proactive engagement. Below is a detailed breakdown of the plan's components.

Strategic Foundation and Priorities
The plan is a living document that aligns all county messaging with the Board of County Commissioners' (BCC) five strategic priorities for 2025–2030.

- Safe, Secure, and Livable Communities
- Vibrant Economy
- Strong Infrastructure
- Healthy People
- Public Trust in Good Government

Audience Analysis and Demographics
The plan identifies five primary audience segments, with a significant focus on the public.

- **The Public:** Residents of Oregon's third-largest county (population 425,857). The population is 87% White, 10% Hispanic/Latino, and 6% Asian. Notably, 93% of households have broadband internet, while 12% speak a language other than English at home.
- **Businesses and Nonprofits:** Over 13,000 business locations and 1,000+ registered nonprofits.
- **Public Officials:** 16 cities with 80–90 elected officials, plus 10–12 state legislators.
- **County Employees:** Over 2,500 staff members who serve as brand ambassadors.
- **Media:** Traditional outlets (TV, radio, newspapers) and digital platforms (Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Nextdoor).

Operational Strategy: Risk and Channels
To manage information fatigue, the county will tailor its communication style to the risk level of a topic or situation.

Communication Approach Matrix

Situation	Risk Tolerance Scale	Communication Approach	Primary Channels
Routine	Neutral	Focus on outcomes: provide informative, clear, and accurate data	Social media, website, email
Sensitive	Neutral-Averse	Focus on transparent, guarded, and consultative feedback loops	Town halls, public meetings
Controversial	Averse-Crisis	Focus on a proactive debate by framing the narrative before others do	Media interviews, opinion pieces, editorials, targeted direct mail, and email

Evaluation and Accountability
The county will not just track how many people see a message, but whether they understand and act on it. Success is categorized into three Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

1. **Public Awareness:** Measured by website reach and unique visitors.
2. **Public Trust:** Measured through sentiment scores and survey-based trust indices.
3. **Active Engagement:** Tracking "amplification rates" (shares/retweets) and the number of people who complete a specific call to action.

Measurement Frequency: Short-term tactical adjustments will happen monthly via digital dashboards, while long-term population-level attitudes will be tracked through annual surveys and focus groups.

Introduction

A strategic communication plan is a living document that aligns messages with the county's strategic plan, goals, and objectives. It identifies key needs, target audiences, message content, delivery methods, and success metrics.

This plan helps the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC), residents, and staff engage in effective dialogue. It aims to improve community understanding and increase impact. It delivers accurate information to the public and employees through coordinated, focused, and unified messaging.

This is Clackamas County's first strategic communication plan. It highlights the BCC's priorities, objectives, goals, vision, and core values in serving residents and stakeholders. It also guides internal and external communication efforts.

This plan expects the county to adopt a more proactive messaging approach. A proactive strategy helps the county plan, unify messaging, communicate effectively, and respond quickly to issues. Proactive communication anticipates challenges and identifies new opportunities. It is the preferred approach whenever possible.

BCC Priorities

This plan supports the BCC's five strategic priorities, which will guide the county's decisions from 2025 to 2030. The plan does not address how to communicate about the 10 goals linked to these priorities. Instead, it focuses on promoting the five strategic priorities. Communication for each of the 10 goals will be handled by the respective teams. Each team's plan will align with the strategies and objectives in this plan. Refer to Appendix A for the full strategic plan.

1. Safe, secure, and livable communities
2. Vibrant economy
3. Strong infrastructure
4. Healthy people
5. Public trust in good government

Situation Analysis

A situation analysis assesses the internal and external factors affecting the county, helping identify the opportunities and challenges it will face as it pursues its goals.

Internal Analysis

The BCC unanimously endorsed the five strategic priorities at its June 2025 retreat. This reflects full commissioner consensus and offers an opportunity to unify messaging and communication strategies.

Each of the five priorities has specific goals. Each goal will have its own communication plan. These plans must work together to improve the county's overall communications. Teams will need to coordinate to keep messages clear and consistent throughout the process.

External Analysis

External factors affect communication strategies and results. To keep strategies effective in changing situations, the county will use the following approaches.

- Scan and monitor the external environment at least annually.
- Tailor strategies based on changing conditions.
- Maintain flexibility in strategies and prepare for contingency actions.

Media

The media can shape public perception, both positively and negatively. Navigating today's media landscape is challenging. As traditional media shrinks, it has fewer resources to verify accuracy. Anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can share news.

Political Climate

Media coverage can influence the county's support or opposition from its audience. The political climate also impacts the county's communication success. Political influences may reach beyond local matters to federal policies. While the county cannot change the political climate, the communication strategy should account for the broader context and address public perceptions and attitudes.

Public Opinion

Understanding public opinion shows whether people will accept or resist messages. It is important to understand the county's risk tolerance and willingness to engage in controversy. This helps choose the right strategies for each audience, especially when their views differ widely.

Risk tolerance refers to the level of risk the county is prepared to accept in pursuit of its goals. The willingness to address controversy depends on whether confrontation and debate are seen as effective strategies and opportunities. The following scale applies to both assessments.

- **Risk- or controversy-averse**: Avoid taking risks whenever possible.
- **Risk- or controversy-neutral**: Unaffected by risk, and decisions are based on expected outcomes.
- **Risk- or controversy-seeking**: Willing to take on risk in pursuit of potential rewards.

Information Fatigue

Information fatigue, or overload, is real. Many channels, such as social media, news, email, and direct mail, complicate messaging. To cut through the noise, the county will focus on long-term positioning, high-quality content, and a compelling narrative to encourage engagement.

Targeted Audiences

The public

Clackamas County is Oregon's third-largest county by population and is growing fast. The population increased 12.34% from 2010 to 2024, reaching about 425,857 in 2024. The county borders Oregon's two largest counties, Multnomah and Washington. Almost 25% of residents are under 18, and 21% are 65 or older. Most residents are White (87%), followed by Hispanic/Latino (10%) and Asian (6%). The following data is from 2023:

- The county has 176,602 housing units and 162,762 households.
- The median household income is $100,360.
- 7% of the population lives in poverty.
- 95% of the population completed high school.
- 40% of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher.
- 97% of households own a computer.
- 93% have broadband Internet.
- 12% of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

In addition to county residents, this audience segment includes groups or entities that support or represent the public interest, such as community-based organizations, schools, and volunteer groups (e.g., community planning organizations, hamlets, and advisory board members).

Businesses and Nonprofit Organizations

Businesses in Clackamas County are key to a strong local economy. In 2022, these businesses earned over $9.5 million in annual payroll and ran almost 13,000 locations. The county also has nearly 35,000 businesses with no employees and 10,500 with at least one employee.

According to data from the Oregon Secretary of State, there are over 1,000 registered nonprofit organizations in Clackamas County, Oregon. The actual number of nonprofits serving county residents is much higher.

Public Officials

Clackamas County has 16 incorporated cities and about 80-90 elected city officials. The exact number depends on the size of the city council. These officials need county information and support. They connect with the BCC, county leaders, and other officials in many meetings and events.

At the state level, Clackamas County has 10 to 12 legislators in the State Senate and House. Districts are drawn by population and may cross county lines. This means the county has representatives from one or more districts.

Clackamas County also engages with many state agencies that oversee and fund county-level programs.

Media

Media includes local newspapers, radio, and TV. It also covers online platforms, including YouTube, as well as social media sites such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Nextdoor, and LinkedIn.

County Employees

Employees are essential to the county's ability to serve. Over 2,500 employees help meet commitments and deliver services. They serve as ambassadors, representing the county's vision and values.

Guiding Communication Principles

The following guiding principles create the framework for this strategic communications plan.

- **Ensure transparency and accessibility** so the public, key stakeholders, media, and county employees can access accurate and relevant information.
- **Share the county's values** to strengthen its collective voice through coordinated messaging, storytelling, and a unified identity.
- **Enhance communication** to encourage two-way dialogue between residents, key stakeholders, and the Board of County Commissioners.
- **Engage the community** to foster trust and long-lasting relationships with residents and key county stakeholders.

Reach and Channels

The following section outlines the methods and channels for deploying the communication strategies. Refer to Appendix B for more information.

- **Traditional Media.** Press releases, media interviews, public service announcements.
- **Digital Media.** Website updates, social media campaigns, and email newsletters.
- **Community Outreach.** Public meetings, town halls, community events, and partnerships with local organizations.
- **Crisis Communication.** Protocols for responding to emergencies or negative situations, including designated spokespeople and communication channels.

Overarching Communication Strategies

The following communication strategies will shape the tactical execution of each strategic priority and lay the foundation for the evaluation plan. Refer to Appendix B for messaging strategies for each strategic priority.

1. Consistent and Cohesive Narrative. This is the practice of ensuring that every message—whether it's an annual report, a social media post, an employee email, or a press release—tells the same core story and aligns with the organization's mission, values, and brand identity. It is

the unified voice and visual presentation of the county across all platforms and audiences. Through a consistent and cohesive narrative, the county:

- **Builds Trust and Credibility:** When the message is unified, stakeholders perceive the organization as stable, reliable, and authentic. Contradictory messages confuse the audience and erode confidence.
- **Strengthens Brand Recognition:** A cohesive narrative reinforces key themes and positioning, making the brand instantly recognizable and memorable in a crowded market.
- **Ensures Clarity:** It eliminates ambiguity, enabling internal teams and external customers to clearly understand the organization's goals and offerings.

2. Two-Way Communication and Feedback Loops. This approach goes beyond simply broadcasting information; it involves actively listening, gathering feedback, and responding to stakeholders' concerns, questions, and criticism. It includes creating accessible channels for dialogue, such as surveys, open forums, contact us forms, and interactive social media. This is important for the following reasons:

- **Improves Decision-Making:** Feedback provides valuable data for product development, policy changes, and strategic direction, ensuring decisions are market-informed and relevant.
- **Fosters Engagement and Loyalty:** When people feel heard, their commitment and loyalty to the organization increase.
- **Provides Early Issue Detection:** Active listening helps communicators identify potential problems, grievances, or emerging trends before they turn into major public issues or crises.

3. Crisis Preparedness and Proactive Messaging: This involves establishing detailed communication protocols, pre-drafted statements, assigned roles, and trained teams *before* any major negative event occurs. Proactive messaging is the practice of openly and transparently communicating potential negative issues early, often before they are fully known, to manage expectations and control the narrative.

- **Minimizes Reputational Damage:** A rapid, coordinated, and pre-approved response drastically reduces the time a crisis is allowed to spiral out of control, protecting the organization's image and value.
- **Maintains Public Confidence:** Communicating quickly, truthfully, and with empathy during a crisis demonstrates accountability and professionalism, which is critical for long-term stakeholder relations.
- **Controls the Narrative:** If the county doesn't speak first and clearly, external sources (media, competitors, social media) will define the narrative. Proactive messaging allows the county to frame the initial conversation.

Risk Assessment, Communication Approach, and Channels

Identify specific issues or conditions that may require a defined communication approach, informed by the situation analysis, and as the work progresses.

Situation	Risk Tolerance Scale	Communication Approach	Primary Channels
Routine	Neutral	Focus on outcomes: provide informative, clear, and accurate data	Social media, website, email
Sensitive	Neutral-Averse	Focus on transparent, guarded, and consultative feedback loops	Town halls, public meetings
Controversial	Averse-Crisis	Focus on a proactive debate by framing the narrative before others do	Media interviews, opinion pieces, editorials, targeted direct mail, and email

Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan will measure the reach and effectiveness of the overarching communication strategies and core messages across the five strategic priorities, as well as the response to a call to action.

The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the communication efforts by analyzing website traffic, social media engagement, survey results, and public opinion polls across the three overarching communication strategies outlined above. Baseline benchmarks will be established, and annual targets for each indicator will be set. Refer to Appendix C for the evaluation plan.

This plan will also be used to measure the reach and effectiveness of the communications strategies developed for each of the 10 strategic priorities' goals.

Conclusion

Strategic planning and communication are interconnected, and when effectively combined, they help overcome challenges, achieve organizational objectives, enhance operational efficiency, and strengthen stakeholder relationships.

The success of this plan depends on proactive planning and coordination of communication strategies between this strategic plan and those for individual goals under each strategic priority, with success measures identified for each.

Equally important is the ability to maintain message discipline across county channels and among messengers. When we uphold message discipline, we stay aligned with our core message, cut through information overload more effectively, and communicate exactly what we want our audience to hear.

The newly adopted strategic plan formalizes the county’s commitment to implementing policies, programs, and services that foster a thriving and resilient community. The efforts behind these initiatives are vital. Sharing our story is equally important.

Appendix A. Clackamas County Performance Clackamas Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Safe, Secure, and Livable Communities

- *Affordable Housing:* By 2030, 900 affordable housing units will be developed, including an emphasis on the senior population and underserved parts of the county.
- *Jail:* By 2028, based upon best practices, the county will complete preliminary design concepts and estimates for a new Clackamas County Jail.

Vibrant Economy

- *Available Land for Business Development:* By 2028, in conjunction with our communities and partners, the county will work to increase available land to retain, expand, and recruit new businesses.
- *Development Process:* By 2028, the county will conduct a review of all development regulatory processes to minimize burdens, providing an effective and timely permitting process for the community.
- *Childcare:* By 2027, in conjunction with our communities and community partners, the county will develop strategies to retain, expand, and recruit new childcare opportunities.

Strong Infrastructure

- *Sunrise Corridor:* By 2030, funding for the next phase of the Sunrise Gateway Corridor/Hwy 212 project will be committed from federal, state, regional, and local funding sources.
- *Transit:* By 2027, the county will provide a plan for what efficient, accessible, and affordable transit looks like in Clackamas County.

Healthy People

- *Recovery-Oriented System of Care (ROSC):* By 2027, the county will continue to address homelessness, mental health, and substance use disorders through the completion and operations of the Clackamas County recovery campus.

Public Trust in Good Government

- *Best Practice Governance:* By 2026, convene a review committee to evaluate best practice county governance models.
- *Communications and Engagement:* By 2026, through the development of a strategic communications and engagement plan, the Clackamas County community will experience greater transparency and accountability from its county government.

Appendix B. Communication Messages

Priority: Safe, Secure, and Livable Communities

Purpose Statement: To foster communities where people feel safe, supported, and connected.

Goal: To work toward safe communities, where residents feel secure, and neighborhoods are a vibrant and welcoming place to live.

Key Messages

1. The county works toward safe neighborhoods and vibrant communities.
2. The county believes every resident matters and every neighborhood counts.

Priority: Vibrant Economy

Purpose Statement: To strengthen the local economy by encouraging business retention and growth, supporting job creation, and ensuring a stable foundation for long-term economic sustainability.

Goal: To foster economic growth that benefits businesses, workers, and the community.

Key Messages

1. The county is dedicated to growing our economy in a way that retains and expands local businesses, creates good jobs, and ensures everyone benefits.
2. The county helps build an economy that connects opportunities with innovation.

Priority: Strong Infrastructure

Purpose Statement: To build and maintain resilient, efficient, and sustainable infrastructure that supports our economy, protects our environment, and enhances the quality of life for residents.

Goal: To invest in reliable infrastructure that ensures safe transportation, modern utilities, and well-maintained public facilities to meet the needs of a growing and dynamic community.

Key Messages

1. The county's investment in infrastructure ensures a competitive, thriving county for generations to come.
2. The county's investment in infrastructure is the essential foundation for long-term economic prosperity.

Priority: Healthy People – Recovery Campus

Purpose Statement: To build a community where people can live healthy, active, and fulfilling lives—supported by care, connection, and compassion.

Goal: To promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of those most in need.

Key Messages

1. The county is dedicated to establishing a recovery campus that will provide a full continuum of services to help people successfully return to the community.
2. The county strives to support a healthy community by ensuring our services reach those in need through a recovery-oriented system of care.

Priority: Public Trust in Good Government

Purpose Statement: To ensure responsible, transparent, and efficient government operations that earn and maintain the trust of the people we serve.

Goal: To strengthen confidence in local government through transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making that reflects community values and delivers results.

Key Messages

1. The county is strongest when we work openly, listen deeply, and act purposefully.
2. The county partners with residents and stakeholders to reflect our community's values, deliver real outcomes, and earn trust.

Appendix C. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation plan will assess how effectively the communication strategies support the five strategic priorities. The plan will be measured not only by how many people saw a message but also by how many understood and acted on it. The evaluation plan includes a quarterly performance review. The key performance indicators (KPIs) to be measured are:

- **Public Awareness:** Measured by reach and unique visitors.
- **Public Trust:** Measured by sentiment scores and survey-based trust indices.
- **Active Engagement:** Measured by the number of people who completed a call to action(number of completed actions compared to the total number of people reached).

Beyond basic tracking, the KPIs are categorized into quantitative and qualitative impact across the following channels:

- **Website:** Measure total traffic, conversion rates (e.g., newsletter sign-ups or resource downloads), and average session duration.
- **Social Media:** Beyond "likes," track amplification rates (shares/retweets) and analyze comment sentiment to gauge public perception.
- **Earned Media:** Track the share of voice and alignment with our priorities in the media.

The evaluation will use three different data sources to confirm a single trend:

- **Analytics:** Real-time monitoring of users across digital platforms to determine which call to action is most effective.
- **Surveys and Quick Polls:** Annual and pulse surveys of key stakeholders to measure message recall and changes in brand recognition.
- **Focus Group:** Semi-annual qualitative interviews to dive deeper into *why* certain core messages are succeeding or failing in specific demographics.

Measurement Frequency

Evaluation Tool	Frequency	Objective
Digital Dashboard	Real-time/monthly	Short-term tactical adjustments to social spend/content.
Public Opinion Surveys, Quick Polls and Focus Groups	Alternating annually	Long-term tracking of shifts in population-level attitudes.
Comprehensive Audit	Annually	Full pivot if KPIs show a disconnect between messages and priorities.

Attachment B

Clackamas County Community Engagement Strategic Plan and Framework

Contents

Clackamas County Community Engagement Strategic Plan 2
Executive Summary 2
Introduction 3
Vision Statement 3
Community Engagement Landscape 3
Established Programs 3
New Programs 4
Recurring Engagement Events and Opportunities 4
Best Practices, Countywide Engagement Continuity, and Data 4
Demographics 5
Challenges and Opportunities 5
Establishing Countywide Coordination and Support through PGA 6
Community Stakeholders 6
Clackamas County Community Engagement Framework 10
Guiding Principles 10
Core Beliefs 10
Community Engagement Model 10
Community Engagement Plans 11
Design 12
Plan 13
Implement 13
Learn 14
Community Engagement Methods and Tools 14
Measurement and Evaluation 15
Communication and Reporting 19
Conclusion 20
Appendix A. Engagement Tools and Methods 21

Clackamas County Community Engagement Strategic Plan

Executive Summary

Clackamas County envisions a future in which people-centered engagement shapes decisions, builds trust, and leads to better outcomes for everyone in the community.

The Strategic Engagement Plan
Grounded in the Board of County Commissioners' core priority of Public Trust in Good Governance, this plan outlines a unified roadmap to enhance government transparency and accountability. It establishes countywide coordination by providing departments with toolkits, guidelines, and training, and by fostering a collaborative Community of Practice, while maintaining decentralized project ownership within individual departments.

The plan is designed to reach diverse core stakeholder groups, ensuring broad public access, early two-way dialogue for directly affected residents and businesses, and culturally responsive, nuanced avenues of participation for partner organizations, including community-based organizations, tribal governments, and unique communities of identity or interest.

Clackamas County's community engagement landscape is anchored by established programs, including advisory boards and commissions (ABCs), community planning organizations (CPOs) that protect land-use involvement, and hamlets or villages that serve as extensions of local leadership in unincorporated regions.

To expand long-term civic capacity, the plan proposes new initiatives, including a youth engagement program that features micro-volunteering for 8th–12th graders, youth internships, and a formal volunteer recognition program.

The Community Engagement Framework
The operating framework embeds public participation in standard operating procedures through five guiding principles: focusing on the community's best interests, designing with clear purpose and milestones, advancing inclusive participation, providing timely and accessible information, and ensuring absolute transparency in decision-making.

Adopting the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower), the county embraces a continuous 4-phase lifecycle for all engagement plans: design, plan, implement, learn.

Appendix: Engagement Tools and Methods
To accommodate varying digital access and time availability—leveraging the county's 97% broadband availability and 93% computer ownership—the framework expands traditional print and broadcast tools by deploying advanced digital, hybrid, and deliberative methods.

Introduction

Community engagement is grounded in the principle that people have the right to shape the policies and laws that affect them. It is the cornerstone of a successful public process. Effective community engagement proactively builds lasting relationships and trust by increasing government transparency. By using engagement best practices, we can gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of those who live and work in the community we serve. This will lead to better outcomes for both the community and the county by enabling those involved to identify concerns, risks, opportunities, options, and solutions through more informed, mutually beneficial, and sustainable decision-making.

Community engagement is central to the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners (BCC)'s fifth strategic priority, public trust in good governance. By 2026, the Clackamas County community will experience greater transparency and accountability from its county government through the development of a strategic communications and engagement plan. The county's ability to fulfill this priority will require ongoing community engagement and coordination.
This Community Engagement Strategic Plan provides a framework for fostering sustained, people-centered, and transparent relationships with the community, guided by best practices, and outlines how the county will engage the community to inform decisions and outcomes.

Vision Statement

Clackamas County envisions a future in which people-centered engagement shapes decisions, builds trust, and leads to better outcomes for everyone in the community.

Community Engagement Landscape

Clackamas County's community engagement is multifaceted and designed to foster stronger relationships with the community. This strategic community engagement document outlines the framework, principles, and best practices that guide the county's public participation efforts. It serves as a roadmap for consistent, effective engagement, helping to build trust, transparency, and collaboration between the county and the communities it serves.

Established Programs

1. **Advisory Boards and Commissions (ABCs)** are county-organized boards of community members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) to provide insight on specific county programs. The board members offer their lived and sometimes professional experience as their expertise to help guide the BCC and staff in ensuring programs meet community needs and reflect community values.
2. **Community Planning Organizations (CPOs)** are community groups that help ensure community involvement in the county's land-use process. CPOs are one of the county's methods for achieving Oregon State Planning Goal 1. CPOs are supported by the county but are not agents of the county, so they can legally oppose land-use decisions. CPOs serve as a

regular meeting body, offering a place for community dialogue on land use and for providing feedback to the county.

3. **Hamlets and Villages** are community groups in unincorporated county regions that connect their communities to county government. As agents of the county, hamlets are extensions of county leadership within the community. Hamlet board members are uniquely positioned to share key information with their communities and to convey the community's perspective to the Board of County Commissioners and county staff.

New Programs

1. **The Youth Engagement Program** invites 8th–12th graders to share their ideas on important county topics through micro-volunteering. Students can also join the leadership track, where they will develop communication and leadership skills, help plan and lead meetings, and potentially earn a letter of recommendation. This will fulfill volunteer-hour requirements for many classes and clubs.
2. **The Internship Program** will engage young adults, introduce them to public service, and increase the capacity of the engagement division and beyond.
3. **The Volunteer Recognition Program** will recognize volunteers for their service while serving as a space to create a volunteer community and county pride in engagement.

Recurring Engagement Events and Opportunities

1. **Townhalls** are meetings held with the BCC, interest groups, and the public to support dialogue and engagement with community members.
2. Yearly **CPO Roundtable** brings CPO leaders and the BCC together to share perspectives on the CPO program.
3. **State of the County** is a yearly event where commissioners share updates on the county's performance, initiatives, and priorities with the public. There is an opportunity for feedback.
4. Biennial **Community Focus Group** is an engagement event that gathers feedback from small groups of varied interests to learn about their concerns and perceptions of the county.

Best Practices, Countywide Engagement Continuity, and Data

1. **Engagement Performance Indicators (EPIs)** measure how well community engagement efforts achieve their goals. They track whether engagement is effective, people-centered, and aligned with its intended purpose. EPIs help the county monitor progress, learn from results, and continually improve engagement practices.
2. **The Community of Practice** brings together staff and partners to share lessons, strategies, and resources on community engagement. It promotes consistency in engagement practices, helps teams learn from one another, and strengthens the county's connection with the community.

3. **Engage Clackamas** is a public-facing webpage that will be an online hub for community participation, connecting people to events, surveys, polls, and volunteer opportunities. It makes it easy to share input and stay informed about engagement projects and decisions.

Demographics

Clackamas County is Oregon's third-largest county by population and one of the state's fastest-growing. Its population increased by 12.34% from 2010 to 2024, reaching an estimated 425,857 residents. It borders Oregon's two most populous counties, Multnomah and Washington. Nearly 25% of residents are under 18, and 21% are 65 or older. The population is mostly White (87%), followed by Hispanic or Latin (10%) and Asian (6%).

Based on 2023 data:

- The median household income is $100,360
- 7% of the population lives in poverty
- 95% of the population completed high school
- 40% of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher
- 97% of households own a computer
- 93% have broadband Internet
- 12% of the population speaks a language other than English at home
- Recent engagement project data found that Spanish-speaking residents rely more on TV, radio, Facebook, and WhatsApp than other media forms for receiving information

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges	**Opportunities**
Ensuring participation from all community members, including historically underrepresented groups	Build people-centered engagement that reaches diverse communities and fosters trust
Collecting meaningful feedback without causing discomfort or harm	Use trauma-informed, culturally responsive data collection methods to empower participants, build relationships that allow for this type of data to be collected
Maintain consistent relationships across departments and projects	Strengthen relationships by collecting feedback, streamlining processes, centralizing guidelines, and creating a hub for engagement information
Engaging community members who may feel hesitant, fearful, or distrustful of the government	Build trust through people-centered approaches, trauma-informed practices, and utilize community partners who have already built relationships
Language barriers and general accessibility issues prevent some community members from participating	Provide materials in multiple languages, use plain language, and ensure accessible formats to create inclusive engagement opportunities

Attachment B

Ensuring count staff and partners consistently share and apply community engagement best practices	Strengthen internal communication through a community of practice, staff trainings, and shared resources to promote consistency, learning, and collaboration across departments
Reaching youth voices who may not want to sign up for long-term commitments and have limited time	Create a micro participation youth program that offers mutual benefits to youth and the county
Some community members may feel unsafe or unwelcome participating due to past experiences, power dynamics, or marginalization	Design engagement spaces that are physically and emotionally safe, welcoming, and inclusive, using trauma-informed and people-centered practices to encourage open and honest participation

Establishing Countywide Coordination and Support through PGA

Public and Government Affairs (PGA) plays a key role in coordinating efforts to enhance consistency, collaboration, and impact across community engagement. While engagement occurs across all county departments, PGA serves as a central resource for best practices, training, policy guidance, and data reporting. This model preserves departmental ownership of individual engagement projects while ensuring a shared standard of quality, inclusivity, and transparency.

PGA develops and maintains engagement policies, toolkits, and templates; provides consultation and training; convenes a community of practice; and produces an annual report summarizing countywide engagement activities and outcomes. The team also supports relationship-building with community partners and maintains an external-facing engagement page that highlights opportunities for public involvement. This coordinated framework enables the county to strengthen its internal capacity and foster a unified, trusted presence in the community.

Community Stakeholders

The county recognizes that everyone who lives, works, or plays here has a stake in our community's future. Engagement is most effective when we understand who is affected by, interested in, or positioned to inform and contribute to the county's decisions.
The county is committed to people-centered engagement that reflects the full diversity of our community. This ensures that all voices, including those historically underrepresented, have meaningful opportunities to participate and to share perspectives that shape the county's direction.

This strategy uses the term stakeholders broadly to include all people and organizations connected to county policies, programs, and services. Engagement approaches are designed to meet each group where they are, reflecting how they're affected, what they care about, and how they can best participate.

***Definition*. Community: A social unit with commonality such as norms, religion, values, customs, or identity. Communities may share a sense of place in a geographical area or be connected in other ways. How we define community impacts who is included and who is left out.**

"Public participation does not mean giving away control or authority. It DOES mean being transparent and honest, as well as thinking about what will help you make decisions – well before you must make the decision or even begin to ask for input." ***IAP2***

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1. **General Public** includes all people who live, work, or spend time in the county. Engagement with the public focuses on **access, transparency, and providing meaningful opportunities for individuals to weigh in** on county decisions. The county values community engagement as essential to trust, accountability, and responsive government.

   Focus of engagement: Accessible, transparent opportunities for the public to learn about and provide input on county decisions.

2. Directly Impacted Stakeholders include individuals, neighborhoods, or entities that experience a **direct or tangible effect** from a county decision, project, or service. Engagement emphasizes early consultation, two-way dialogue, and collaboration to ensure that decisions reflect lived experience and reduce unintended impacts. Examples include:

- Residents and businesses near a proposed development or infrastructure project
- Recipients of county services or benefits
- Property owners or tenants affected by zoning or policy changes
- Regulated entities or service contractors

Focus of engagement: Early, two-way communication that invites shared understanding and meaningful feedback to improve outcomes and reduce unintended impacts.

3. Partner Organizations and Institutions

Partner organizations help the county design, deliver, and sustain programs and services. Engagement with partners focuses on **collaboration, coordination, and shared outcomes** that inform and strengthen county decisions. Examples include:

- Tribal governments
- Neighboring jurisdictions and regional agencies
- **Community-based organizations.** These are the bridges to reach the communities we serve. They are key stakeholders in the community with established relationships and trust. Community-based organizations are nonprofit groups organized and operated by community members to support community needs.
- Business and industry groups

- Faith-based organizations
- Educational institutions
- Unions and professional associations

Focus of engagement: Ongoing coordination and shared learning to align goals, leverage resources, build relationships, strengthen county decisions, and increase positive outcomes.

4. Communities of Interest and Identity include stakeholders who share cultural, geographic, or lived experiences that shape how they engage with and are affected by county decisions. The county is committed to **people-centered, culturally responsive engagement** that reaches these communities and fosters trust and a sense of belonging. Examples include:

- Culturally specific and immigrant communities
- Communities of color
- People with disabilities
- Youth, older adults, and families
- LGBTQ+, faith groups
- Low-income or rural communities
- Environmental and advocacy groups
- Grass-roots groups focused on diversity and inclusion

Focus of engagement: Culturally responsive, inclusive approaches that build relationships and trust while ensuring county initiatives reflect the full range of community experiences. Engagement methods are designed with input from trusted community partners and adapted to meet community needs. Clackamas County is diverse, yet this diversity is often missing in our public process. We recognize that communities of interest have unique needs and are not homogeneous groups, as each group may hold multiple intersecting identities that require nuanced solutions.

5. Volunteers include those from ABCs, CPOs, hamlets, short-term committees, and others who regularly engage with the county on topics and provide regular feedback and recommendations. Examples include:

- Advisory board and commission members
- Members of CPOs and hamlets
- Neighborhood association representatives
- Short-term committees

Focus of engagement: Connection, recognition, and support to strengthen their ability to represent community perspectives and provide informed recommendations.

6. Youth include young people living, studying, or working in the county, representing the next generation of civic participants and leaders.
Focus of engagement: Active participation, learning, and collaboration that ensure youth perspectives help inform county initiatives and long-term community priorities.
Youth play an important role in strengthening programs, fostering innovation, and ensuring long-term outcomes. They should be engaged as active participants who contribute ideas, feedback,

and leadership to shape county initiatives and build a future community of educated, engaged, and community-minded leaders. Examples include:

- The Youth Engagement Program and internships
- Partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations
- Youth representation on county committees and projects

Clackamas County Community Engagement Framework

Guiding Principles

Clackamas County can achieve its vision by adopting a cohesive, robust community engagement framework that ensures the public process reflects the community's voice and needs. The framework is built on five guiding principles:

1. **Focus on the best interests of the community**, grounding engagement in shared values, public trust, and the long-term well-being of Clackamas County residents.
2. **Design engagement with a clear purpose and milestones**, ensuring community members understand when and how their input can shape outcomes.
3. **Advance inclusive and equitable participation** by identifying barriers, reaching underrepresented voices, and creating accessible pathways for engagement.
4. **Provide timely, accurate, and easy-to-understand information** so community members can fully participate and build ongoing, trusted relationships with the county.
5. **Be transparent about decisions and impacts**, clearly communicating how community input informs planning, policies, and actions.

These principles will be embedded in our standard operating procedures as we seek public input at the outset of any county planning or decision-making process that is a good fit for engagement.

Core Beliefs

As we aspire toward universal goals that bring better outcomes for the communities we serve, we recognize that the strategies we develop must be responsive to community context, barriers, and lived experience. While our approaches may vary, our core beliefs remain the same:

- Community stakeholders have a right to participate in the decision-making process.
- Community stakeholders' contributions should influence the county's decisions.
- The county promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing the needs and interests of all participants.
- The county seeks out and facilitates involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- The county seeks input from community stakeholders in designing how they participate.
- The county provides information that community stakeholders need to participate in a meaningful way.
- The county communicates to community stakeholders how their input impacts or affects a decision.
- The county engages stakeholders by meeting them where they are, culturally, linguistically, and geographically.

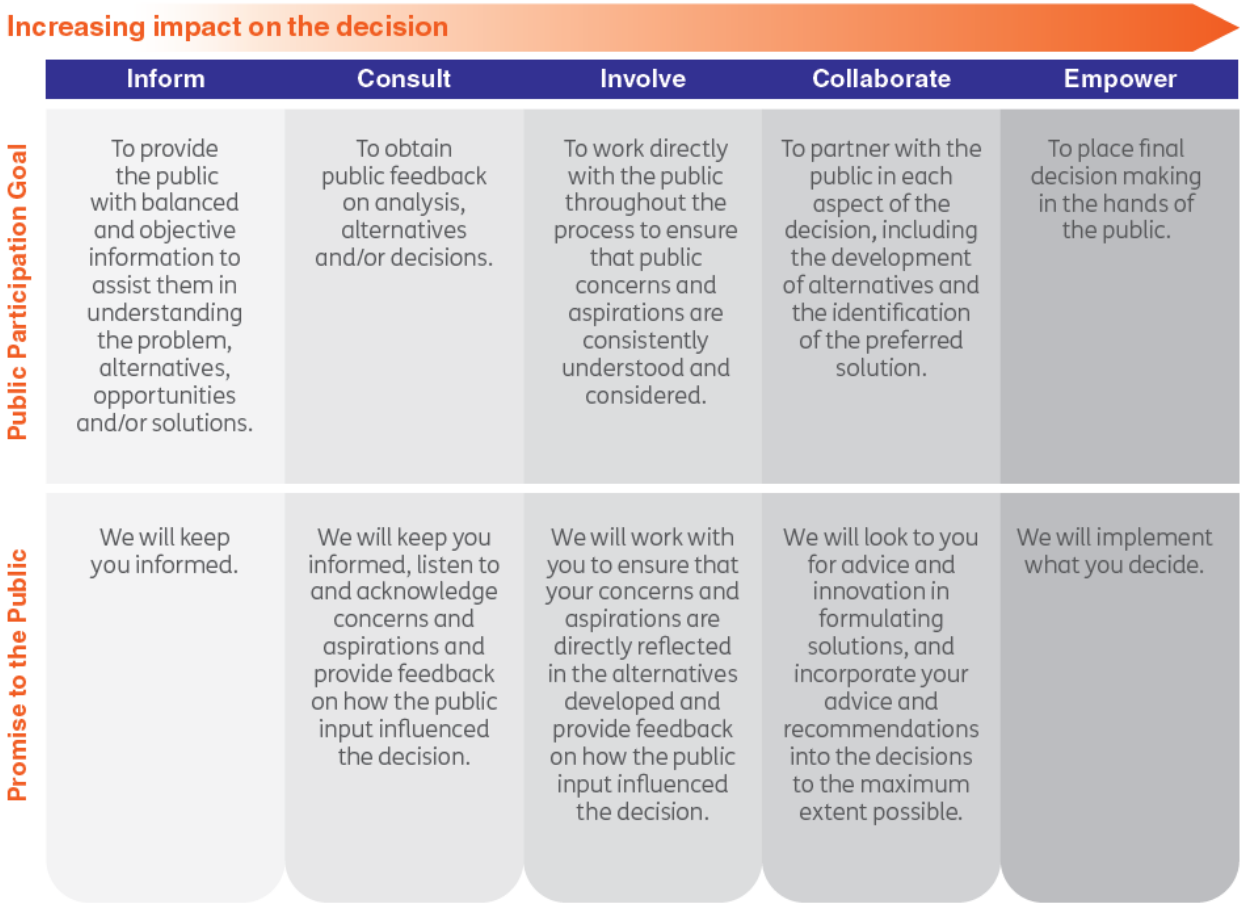
Community Engagement Model

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Public Engagement Spectrum serves as the county's community engagement model. Clackamas County will apply the model's best

practices across all departments and invest the resources needed to support authentic, transparent, people-centered, and equitable engagement.

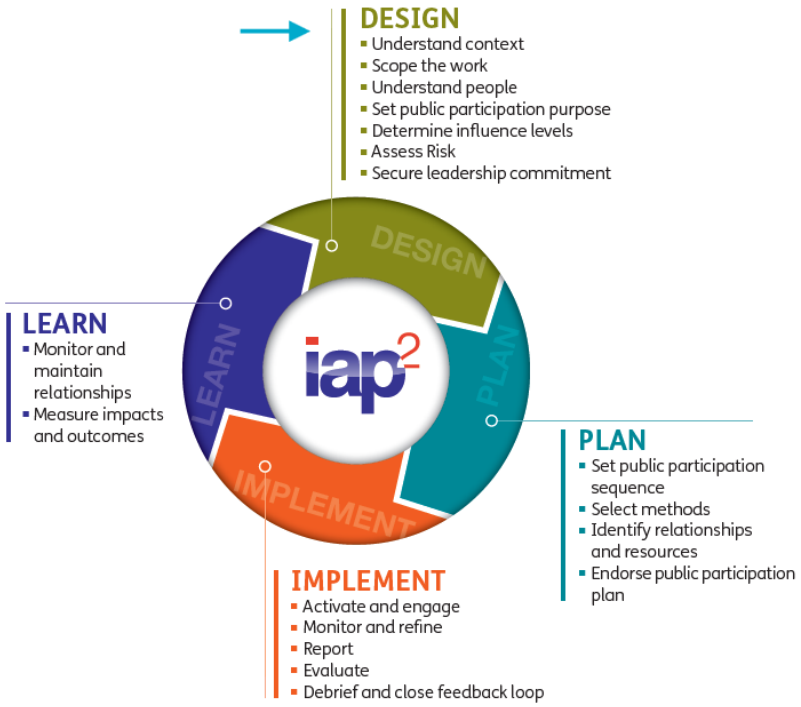
Depending on project goals and the level of engagement required, community stakeholders will have clear expectations about how the process will proceed, how they will be engaged, where they can influence decisions, and how their input will inform outcomes.

Public Engagement Spectrum (The International Association for Public Participation)



Community Engagement Plans

Clackamas County's community engagement plans will embody the vision, principles, and strategies outlined above and be tailored to the needs of each community stakeholder group. PGA provides people-centered guidance and proven best practices in community engagement, partnering with departments to design engagement plans that prioritize relationship-building and connect community insights to county decision-making. Plans should include the following:



Design

Understand context, scope the work, understand people, and set the foundation.

During this phase, departments and partners work together to create a clear, people-centered foundation for the engagement effort.

- **Understand the context**. Examine the issue, the communities affected, existing conditions, histories, and values that may shape trust and participation.
- **Define the scope of work**. Clarify which decisions are being made, what is flexible, what constraints exist, and how the issue may impact different communities.
- **Understand people and relationships**. Conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify who is affected, who should be included, and who has been historically left out. Assess community dynamics and potential barriers to engagement. Include a context analysis to understand how local, regional, state, and national issues may affect the engagement process.
- **Set purpose and goals**. Define what the engagement aims to accomplish and how it supports relationship building, people-centered focus, and good governance.
- **Determine the level of influence (IAP2 spectrum)**. Establish whether the engagement will inform, consult, involve, collaborate, or empower communities. Identify how community input will inform decisions.
- **Assess risks and sensitivities**. Understand potential challenges, trust issues, or political/legal considerations that may shape the engagement approach.
- **Secure leadership commitment**. Ensure departmental leaders and partners understand the approach, expectations, timelines, and role of engagement.
- **Develop engagement performance indicators (EPIs)**. Identify early indicators of success, such as participation, diversity of input, or relationship-building outcomes.

A resource for developing engagement performance indicators is available in the measurement and evaluation section. These guide strategies, shape activities, and ensure engagement efforts are purposeful and aligned with the decision being made. The quality of the metrics is more important than the quantity.

Plan

Map out the work, pathways, communication, and resources before engagement begins.

This phase focuses on creating a structured and accessible roadmap grounded in clear expectations and people-centered design.

- **Set engagement phases and sequence**. Map the timeline, decision points, phases, and key moments to engage communities.
- **Select engagement methods**. Select strategies (online, in-person, or hybrid) that are accessible, culturally responsive, and tailored to the specific issue and the communities involved. A detailed list of methods and tools is provided in the appendix.
- **Determine how community input will be used**. Define how feedback will be collected, synthesized, shared, and incorporated into decision-making.
- **Identify relationships and resources**. Decide which internal teams, community partners, and cultural connectors are needed, and identify required staff, budget, translation, facilitation, and outreach resources.
- **Develop a communication plan**. Outline how you will raise awareness, build trust, sustain relationships, and ensure transparency throughout the project. Include communications about the planning and development phases, how feedback will be provided to the community about the engagement process, what has been heard, and how that feedback will be considered during the planning and development stages.
- **Endorse the plan**. Ensure leadership approves the scope, roles, resources, and timelines before implementation begins.

Implement

Activate engagement in a transparent, accessible, and relationship-centered manner.

This phase focuses on implementing the plan while maintaining flexibility, transparency, and an ongoing connection to community needs.

- **Activate and engage**. Launch outreach, host engagement activities, and connect with communities using the selected methods.
- **Monitor and refine in real time**. Pay attention to participation, accessibility issues, and feedback, adjusting the approach as needed.
- **Build and maintain relationships throughout**. Foster trust, honor cultural norms, and ensure participants feel heard and valued.
- **Report what is being heard**. Document community input clearly and share emerging themes with decision-makers, partners, and the public.
- **Evaluate the engagement**. Gather feedback on the process, accessibility, effectiveness, and outcomes related to relationship building.

- **Debrief and close the feedback loop**. Communicate back to participants how their input was used ("You said, we heard, here's what we are doing"). This does not mean that each engagement project will result in actions being taken based on what the community said. Sometimes, hearing the public's perspective is important for influencing decisions, providing information for future planning, or understanding perspectives that cannot be directly applied, but are equally important to learn about. This still builds trust when communicating clearly at the beginning of the engagement.

Learn

Reflect, improve, and continue to cultivate relationships.

Learning is both an end phase and an ongoing practice that strengthens future engagement and community trust.

- **Monitor and maintain relationships**. Continue strengthening community connections beyond a single project.
- **Measure impacts and outcomes**. Use defined metrics to assess engagement, quality, community insights, decision impacts, and longer-term trust-building.
- **Reflect and improve**. Identify lessons learned, update guidance, celebrate successes, and document areas for growth.
- **Apply insights to future work**. Use what was learned to enhance countywide engagement practices, tools, and support. Share these with PGA and potentially with the Community of Practice group.

Community Engagement Methods and Tools

Clackamas County will consider and implement a variety of community engagement tools appropriate for different levels of engagement to ensure a successful process and achieve the desired objectives. Our biggest challenge remains reaching residents and communities with limited English proficiency—one that requires adequate resources and support.

While the county will continue to use traditional tools, such as print materials, advertisements, and in-person engagement, we will also expand our engagement strategies to leverage advances in digital tools. As digital communication continues to change how people access information and engage with the government on important issues, the county will continue to explore and implement a wide range of online tools, forums, workshops, surveys, and polling.

Not all residents have the time to be actively involved in their community. With 97% broadband coverage in Clackamas County and 94% of households owning computers, online and digital engagement offers a level of accessibility not previously available. In addition to accessibility, online platforms are portable and interactive, providing real-time information. Key benefits include:

- Providing access to a more diverse group of community stakeholders and bringing more people into conversations that affect their community: busy people, working parents,

younger people, senior citizens, shift workers, and people with mobility, vision, or hearing impairments.
- Providing a secure space for people to learn and test assumptions, positions, and options.
- Offering cost-effective and efficient engagement systems.
- Improving transparency and responsiveness.
- Supporting community ownership at all levels of the engagement spectrum.

A list of engagement tools is available as **Appendix A** at the end of the document.

Measurement and Evaluation

Setting clear goals from the outset is essential to meaningful evaluation. These goals form the foundation for your engagement performance indicators (EPIs)—the measures that show whether engagement was effective, people-centered, and aligned with its intended purpose. EPIs help track progress, learn from each effort, and continuously improve engagement practices. When selecting indicators, focus on metrics that are meaningful and measurable, prioritizing quality over quantity. PGA can provide guidance to help departments develop appropriate EPIs for their projects.

When defining your goals and EPIs, ensure they are specific, measurable, and linked to outcomes, rather than just activities.

Type	Weak Example	Strong Example
Goal	"Engage the community on the new transportation plan."	"Increase awareness of the new transportation plan and gather meaningful input from at least 200 community members across all neighborhoods."
EPI	"Number of meetings held."	"Percentage of participants who report feeling their input was heard and understood."
EPI	"Count of comments received."	"Diversity of input collected compared to community demographics."

Tip

Strong EPIs focus on quality, reach, and impact, not just quantity. Measuring only attendance or the number of comments doesn't tell you whether engagement with the intended communities was meaningful or useful to decision-makers.

What the County Can Measure

The county's engagement measurement framework should include both **process indicators** (how engagement was conducted) and **impact indicators** (how it influenced decisions, relationships, and outcomes). Departments can select or adapt these examples to match the scale and intent of their projects.

1. Participation and Reach

Measures *who participated* and *how effectively engagement reached those affected by county decisions*. Tracking not only total participation but also new and returning participants provides valuable insight into the county's progress toward building long-term relationships: Are we reaching the right people, especially those most affected or historically underrepresented? Are we reaching new people who haven't participated, and are they returning?

What to Measure	How to Measure
Participation numbers overall and representation – not just how many people participated, but whether participation reflected the communities most affected by the decision, or compared to who/ how many were invited to attend	Track attendance or registration across engagement activities; use voluntary demographic questions or ZIP code data to assess representation relative to the affected population.
Representation across geography, demographics, and stakeholder groups	Optional demographic survey (anonymous), registration data, mapping participation by zip code or district
Participation from historically underrepresented groups, new and returning participants	Voluntary demographic data, comparison to Census or county population data, attendance, or registration gathering new and returning participants
Accessibility of engagement opportunities (language, location, time, accommodations)	Use a short post-event accessibility checklist or rubric for staff to assess the accommodations provided, what barriers emerged, and how future events could be improved. Include ADA compliance review for physical or digital accessibility as appropriate.
Digital engagement (views, comments, shares, downloads)	Web analytics, social media metrics, engagement page reports

2. Quality of Engagement Experience

Measures *how participants experienced* the engagement and whether it felt meaningful and respectful. Was the engagement process meaningful and equitable from the participant's perspective?

What to Measure	How to Measure
Participant satisfaction and sense of being heard	Post-event survey (Likert-scale questions like "I felt my input was valued"), using a comment period at the end of an event for feedback

Clarity of process and information provided	Participant survey or post-session feedback form
Accessibility and inclusivity of format	Facilitator observation form or peer review checklist
Participants' increased understanding of county issues or decisions	Pre- and post-event survey or quick knowledge check question
Staff assessment of engagement quality	Internal debrief template capturing successes, barriers, and lessons learned

3. Influence and Impact

Measures *how engagement outcomes informed county decisions and processes*. Did engagement make a visible difference in county decisions or actions?

What to Measure	How to Measure
Whether community input influenced final decisions or recommendations	Comparison of engagement summary themes to decision outcomes; decision-maker feedback
The extent to which public priorities appear in staff reports or policy drafts	Content analysis of reports or meeting minutes
Documentation showing "you said, we listened" feedback loop	Publish engagement summary reports and follow-up communications
Percentage of advisory or community recommendations adopted or considered	Tracking spreadsheet of recommendations and disposition (how feedback was used, considered)

4. Relationship and Trust-Building

Measures *the longer-term effects of engagement on relationships, trust, and continued participation*. Are we strengthening long-term relationships and public confidence? Are we not only reaching people once, but building ongoing relationships that encourage continued participation and trust over time?

What to Measure	How to Measure
Repeat participation or ongoing involvement	Registration system tracking participant names or emails (opt-in only)
Growth of partnerships or collaborations resulting from engagement	Staff report-out or tracking of new or ongoing partnerships
Qualitative evidence of trust (how people talk about the county, tone of feedback)	Sentiment analysis of comments, surveys, focus groups, or media tracking
Community perception of county transparency and responsiveness	Periodic community trust survey, focus groups, or inclusion in community satisfaction surveys

Engagement of previously underrepresented or "hard-to-reach" communities	Compare participation lists with demographic or geographic data over time to identify new groups or individuals not represented in prior engagements.
Repeat participation (people or organizations returning to future engagements)	Track repeat attendance through voluntary sign-ins or registration systems. Ask a simple survey question, such as "Have you participated in a county engagement before?" to calculate the percentage of returning participants.
Strength or depth of relationships with community partners or organizations	Maintain a relationship log or tracker that records new partnerships formed, contact frequency, and collaboration outcomes over time.
Community perception of accessibility, responsiveness, and trust	Include trust-related questions in follow-up or periodic countywide surveys (e.g., "I trust the county to consider community input in its decisions"). Conduct focus groups with community partners annually to discuss relationship quality.
Growth of engagement networks	Track the number of new partner organizations, community leaders, or outreach channels developed through engagement activities.

5. Internal Learning and Improvement

Measures *how county staff and departments learn from engagement and improve over time*. Is the county building organizational capacity, continuously improving its engagement?

What to Measure	**How to Measure**
Completion of staff debriefs and documentation of lessons learned	Post-engagement reflection template or reporting tool
Adjustments or changes made in future engagements based on past evaluations	Review of project summaries, documented follow-up actions
Staff participation in engagement training and communities of practice	Training attendance records, meeting logs
Adoption of shared engagement tools and templates	Department self-assessment or tracking usage of county-provided resources

6: Countywide Measures (Infrastructure and Capacity Building)

PGA will track participation, communication, and organizational learning to ensure consistent application of best practices and ongoing improvement across the county.

What to Measure	How to Measure
Community of Practice (CoP) participation and impact (naming: Community Engagement Forum, County Engagement Network, Engagement Innovation Lab)	Track attendance and cross-departmental participation in the county's CoP. Gather participant feedback on the usefulness and applicability of shared practices. Evaluate examples of how CoP learnings are being applied in projects or policies.
Staff training and capacity in engagement	Track the number of staff trained in engagement tools and practices annually; pre-/post-training confidence surveys
Consistency and quality of engagement reporting	Review departmental engagement documents for best practices, outcomes, and alignment with county principles.
Cross-department collaboration on engagement projects	Track shared engagement projects or joint initiatives facilitated by PGA. Measure frequency and outcomes of collaborative projects.
Continuous improvement and learning loop	Assess how lessons learned (via CoP or evaluations) are integrated into policy or practice updates. Maintain a living Engagement Learning Report documenting CIPs.

Communication and Reporting

Clear, timely communication is essential to effective engagement. The county is committed to transparency, ensuring that engagement results, updates, and decisions are shared both internally and with the community. Internally, engagement findings will be communicated to staff, departments, and leadership to inform decision-making, support coordination, and promote continuous improvement. Externally, the county will provide accessible, understandable, and responsive public reporting that demonstrates how community input has been considered and how it has influenced outcomes. This approach reinforces trust, accountability, and the county's ongoing commitment to inclusive and meaningful engagement.

Key communication methods

- **Internal:** staff briefings, engagement reports, internal newsletters, and Community of Practice updates.
- **External/Public:** Engage Clackamas, a public-facing webpage, could be an important tool to publish engagement summaries and key findings, meeting and engagement opportunities, open recruitments, engagement reports, volunteer recognition events, and surveys/polls to engage the community and cultivate relationships.

- **Transparency commitment:** ensure reporting clearly documents how input was received, considered, and applied in county decisions.

Conclusion

This community engagement strategy establishes a clear, people-centered framework that improves how Clackamas County listens, collaborates, and builds lasting relationships with the communities we serve. By grounding our work in shared values, a consistent Design–Plan–Implement–Learn process, and recognized best practices, the county is better equipped to engage transparently, reduce barriers, and effectively connect community insights to county decision-making.

This approach guides the county toward a more intentional, relationship-driven model—one that treats departments as partners, provides clear guidance and tools, and ensures that community engagement is aligned, coordinated, and repeatable across the organization. As community expectations evolve and new communication and engagement technologies emerge, this framework enables the county to adapt while remaining rooted in trust, clarity, and accountability.

Successful implementation will depend on leadership commitment, adequate resources, and a shared organizational culture that values community voice. By consistently applying this framework and learning from each engagement, Clackamas County can strengthen public trust and deliver services, decisions, and outcomes that truly reflect the needs and wisdom of our communities.

Appendix A. Engagement Tools and Methods

The table below lists many traditional and emerging tools and methods to consider when implementing a community engagement initiative.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Print materials	Brochures, newsletters, fact sheets, articles in newsletters, or rate notices.	Inform	• Can create awareness and interest within the community. • Can be tailored to specific groups and interests.	• Expensive to produce. • Hard to target or monitor effectiveness. • Can miss minority groups. • Timing can be a constraint.
Advertisements	Print, TV, radio, digital, and media releases.	Inform	• Fast, efficient, and wide-reaching. • Opportunity to position projects positively with key messages.	• Expensive • Hard to target or monitor effectiveness. • Can miss minority groups.
Websites	Provide accessible, clear, and appropriate information cost-effectively. Can also be used for two-way information exchange.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Can provide targeted information about projects cost-effectively. • Can allow community members to ask questions and receive answers that are accessible to all. • Can provide links to online surveys.	• Maintenance and resource requirements to review and refresh content, and to monitor and respond to community comments.
Email feedback	A cost-effective and easy way to obtain ideas on an issue or a range of issues.	Inform – Consult	• A quicker form of participation and may be attractive to those with little time. • Can ask specific questions and, potentially, have them answered.	• Emails received must be tracked carefully to make sure that they are acknowledged and, where this commitment has been given, responded to. • A community member may believe the email is a properly made submission, when it may not be.
Hotlines	Information provided through a 1-800 number.	Inform	• Creates a single point of contact for inquiries and requests for information. • Allows community members to speak directly about their concerns and questions.	• Activation is required to generate interest.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Public meetings	Opportunity for stakeholders to voice their views on important issues. Require a strong moderator to ensure the meeting flows properly.	Inform – Consult	• Offers community opportunity to attend and have their opinion heard. • Allows for the most important issues to be raised and gives people for whom these issues are most relevant the opportunity to discuss. • Can enable community members to share issues and to move on.	• Difficult to get a nuanced understanding from a single meeting. • Challenging for quieter community members. • Tendency to focus on the squeaky wheels and those who are confident enough to speak in front of a large group. • Potential for a mob mentality to form.
Telephone surveys/polls	Structured and quantitative responses on specific issues.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Good way to quickly assess current awareness of, and attitude towards, particular issues. • A simple vote on a topic will give an indication of the level of local awareness and support. • Opportunity to capture views of community members who may not actively engage in a planning process or attend public displays or meetings. • Provides input from a cross-section of the community, which can be randomly selected and provides a statistically valid sample. • Higher response rate than mailed surveys, as participants are recruited and researchers continue until they have achieved their sample size.	• More expensive to deliver and more labor-intensive than mailed surveys.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Interviews	A standard set of questions is posed to individuals. Data gathered must be carefully analyzed to provide an accurate representation of public opinion.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Provides important qualitative information about community perceptions of planning projects, or observations about their local community, at a level of detail that can be difficult to obtain by any other method. • Good way of raising community understanding about planning concepts. • Good way of finding and recruiting other community members who may be able to help with other engagement techniques. • Opportunity for in-depth information.	• Expensive and more labor-intensive, depending on the number of community members being interviewed.
Small group meetings	Generate discussion and insight on aspects of a project from a known group of stakeholders. Need a clear agenda and a strong facilitator to keep the meeting on track.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Opportunity for planners to have a more detailed conversation about projects and processes with interested community members. • Opportunity to meet with community groups that support people with disabilities, older people, younger people, and indigenous people.	• May need to reimburse group members for travel and offer meals if the meeting lasts longer than two hours. • Not a broad sample from which to draw.
Public displays/ Community events	Present at a local venue to gain informal input from a broad cross-section of stakeholders.	Inform – Consult	• Allows community members to discuss concerns about projects with local government planners. • Allows community members to gather information about projects and processes, and share their views. • A wider cross-section of community members can attend. • Opportunity to share accurate information about projects and process.	• Potential for lack of clarity in purpose. • Requires intensive staff resources.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Open houses	An informal event that provides information relating to a range of topics and issues. Multiple engagement techniques can be used to encourage and capture conversation.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Open invitation, so all interested community members can attend. • Selection of engagement techniques depends on the nature of the topic and the purpose of the engagement process. • Food and entertainment can be provided to encourage attendance. If this is the case, the event could also be referred to as a festival or a fair.	• Based on scale and number of interested participants, events could be expensive to hold. • Robust information-capture processes need to be in place.
Workshops	Stakeholders, project team, planning and design professionals, technical experts, and community members who work in small groups to present ideas and approaches to a defined problem or opportunity.	Inform – Consult – Involve – Collaborate	• Broad consensus of stakeholders and community representatives in a short period. • Opportunity to build an understanding of design processes with community members.	• Resource-intensive, but effective method for working through complex problems relatively quickly. • Lead time for planning is resource-intensive.
Steering groups	A group of high-level stakeholders or experts who provide guidance on key issues. These are not usually representative of the broader community, but more a panel of experts who guide decision-making.	Inform – Consult – Involve – Collaborate	• The purpose can vary greatly from members providing their own feedback or ideas about planning processes to members acting as a conduit between the broader community and organization. • Can lead to stakeholder decision-making and input over time, depending on the terms of the group.	• Defining demographic relevance can be challenging. • Not all parties may be adequately represented. • Power dynamics may emerge and stifle authentic engagement.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Community reference groups	A broad-based, structured group of stakeholders and community representatives who meet regularly and operate under clear terms and objectives.	Inform – Consult – Involve – Collaborate	• The purpose can vary greatly from members providing their own feedback or ideas about planning processes to members acting as a conduit between the broader community and organization. • Can lead to stakeholder decision-making and input over time.	• Can involve a slow-paced decision-making process. • Can be good for broad consensus, but not necessarily demographically representative.
Resident panels	A large number of people selected to represent the population are deliberating on a range of issues over a set period.	Inform – Consult – Involve – Collaborate	• If the recruitment process is rigorous, resident panels can be an effective method for securing input from a representative sample of community members over time. • Provides opportunity for community members to understand planning concepts and process.	• Can be expensive and resource-intensive to manage both recruitment and management time. • Members may confuse the panel's deliberative process with a decision-making role.
Engagement apps	Mobile platforms that engage audiences are unlikely to attend traditional engagement events and reach younger, more mobile audiences.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• A broad range of information types can be loaded into an app, including interactive content. • Can gather live data. • Mobile usage is at an all-time high. • Cost-effective way to engage people where they are, essentially bringing engagement to them. • As new engagement tools emerge, they can be loaded into an app, which can function as a platform for progressive advancements and additions to the engagement tool.	• Resources to develop content. • Time to allow for approvals and uploading of apps to Apple and GooglePlay. • A degree of technological comfort is required to use apps. • This type of technology may not be appropriate for all comments.
Social media	Online social engagement platforms that allow for broad-based comments and feedback.	Inform – Consult	• More direct format to submit ideas and provide feedback. • High usage levels. • Good for overcoming geographic constraints. • Relatively easy to create and share content.	• Anonymity and lack of control present a challenge. • Requires participants to have an account. • Monitoring can be labor intensive.
Online survey/polling tools	A quick and effective way to get a snapshot of community sentiment.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Good for fast data and community sentiment in relation to emergent issues. • Quantitative data. • Relatively cost effective.	• No complexity of data. • No opportunity to interrogate data in more detail.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Hardcopy surveys/questionnaires	A standard set of questions is conducted through face-to-face interviews, self-completion, over the phone, or electronically.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Popular method of collecting point-in-time qualitative and quantitative information from a population. • Good way to find out opinions of local people on a particular planning topic in a structured way that can be extensively analyzed. • Good way to inform people about the project. • Good way to reach many people and involve those who may not be able to engage in other ways. • Input from those who may not attend the public meeting. • Provides a mechanism for extending a mailing list. • Provides a cross-section of the community, not only activists.	• Response rate can be low. • To get statistically valid results, it can be labor-intensive and expensive. • Level of detail may be limited. • Less effective in obtaining responses to complex issues. • Effective analysis of data can be labor-intensive and requires a high level of expertise.
Online forums	A virtual gathering space for stakeholders to connect and share ideas, thoughts, and recommendations. Forums can be open or closed. Recruitment of participants is critical, as are rules of engagement. These may have a formal moderator or be self-moderated.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Can build a robust community and deep relationship over time. • Allows engagement based on participants' time and availability. • Great potential for detailed qualitative data. • Can be moderated by a community manager or self-moderated. • Can be an open or closed forum.	• Can be expensive if additional website functionality is required. • Strong moderation is necessary for success. • Can be resource-intensive, requiring maintenance, review, and refresh of content, and monitoring and responding to community comments.
Gamefication	The use of game thinking and game mechanics in a non-game context to engage users in solving problems.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Can provide a fun way to encourage community participation and greater community understanding of project concepts. • Helps users to explore scenarios, understand impacts of planning choices, or to understand different perspectives.	• May not be appropriate for your engagement purposes. • The concept or idea may not be compelling enough for people to play it.

Tool	Description	Level of Participation (Inform-Consult-Involve-Collaborate-Empower)	Benefits	Considerations
Conversation kits	Self-guided discussion that allows interested community members to explore and contribute to planning processes at their own pace and at a location of their choice.	Inform – Consult – Involve	• Allows community members to engage in conversation about project processes and concepts in an environment they feel comfortable in. • Helps to build social networks within the community. • If background information is well designed and easy to understand, community awareness and understanding will improve. • Kits can be designed for use in school environments.	• Relies on community members being motivated to access and use the kit, and capture and submit a record of the conversation. • Success relies on comprehensive promotion of the kit.
Community summits	An event that brings together many participants to explore and discuss an issue. These can be interactive, collaborative, and deliberative. Participants can either be selected or self-nominate.	Inform – Consult – Involve – Collaborate	• The approach to participant selection can range from invitation-only, directly invited, randomly selected community members, self-nominated, or a combination of all three of these approaches. • The selection of engagement techniques incorporated as part of the summit is dependent on the purpose of the event and the budget. • Depending on approach and topic, summits can attract considerable media interest.	• Event needs to incorporate feedback processes, so that participants can understand what has been discussed. • Based on scale and number of participants, event can be expensive to stage.