Improving Civic Participation and Engagement

From Barriers to Bridges

by

Christine Martin

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Abstract

This paper explores the area of civic participation and engagement and how it can be improved, particularly at the local level. The intent is to better understand what empowers and inspires people in engagement, and what barriers they may face, so we can build bridges to getting more people involved in more impactful ways. The study is rooted in an extensive survey of engagement literature, resources and contemporary thinking, along with interviews with subject matter experts and engagement observation. Part One delves into current contexts and challenges and how they impact—and may be remedied through—better engagement. Part Two explores the meaning of engagement, tackling different perspectives and emerging themes and practices. In order to better understand how to better enable local participation, Part Three examines five levels of barriers and then highlights a wide range of benefits that can arise out of authentic engagement practices. Using fresh insights from this enquiry, Part Four proposes several innovative tools for consideration, development and testing. The hope is that these tools might help practitioners and changemakers create and deliver more powerful engagement toward thriving communities and cities.

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Part One: Context

The need for renewing civic engagement practices for today and tomorrow

Today's challenges are big, complex and interconnected. Around the world, communities are grappling with economic disparities and heightened concerns around such things as housing, transportation, mental health, and the changing nature of work, all accentuated by climate change. COVID-19, with its global health, societal and economic impacts, has added another layer of concern. Evolving communities in an age of urbanization require innovative responses for tackling city and community-level needs.

These challenges impact everyone. And everyone can—and should—play a part in facing these challenges, finding solutions, and building resilience. The wisdom and action of the crowd are key. We need ways for all people to participate, to connect and to forge better futures - together. As noted by Jane Jacobs, "[We] have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody" (Jacobs, 2016, p. 238).

Children, youth, elders, new immigrants, community leaders, those struggling with mental health and housing—all should be involved in shaping this future. We need to engage the privileged and the marginalized, including members of visible minorities, personas with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and women. We need civil servants and politicians at all levels of governments to recognize and act out of this belief. We need funders, social service agencies, not-for-profits and grassroots groups to rise to the same challenge. Urban planners, academics and those in the private sector can all help bring the public into the conversation and action. All are a part of this ecosystem of actors in our neighbourhoods, our communities, our cities and our society—an ecosystem that can help or hinder people in being active community participants who live out their citizenship.

But cracks have been opening in the fabric of civil and democratic society. The Edelman Trust Barometer (Edelman, 2020) highlights a growing distrust in institutions of all kinds (including governments, businesses, non-governmental organizations and media) that is rooted in a growing perception that they increasingly serve the interests of the few over everyone. Russon, Gilman and Souris (2020) note that "democracy around the globe is in crisis today, with trust in government, voter participation and satisfaction with democracy all in decline worldwide" (p. 8). There is growing polarization across ideological divides, with people retreating to their bubbles of "people like them" (Case et al., 2019; Polimedio, 2017).

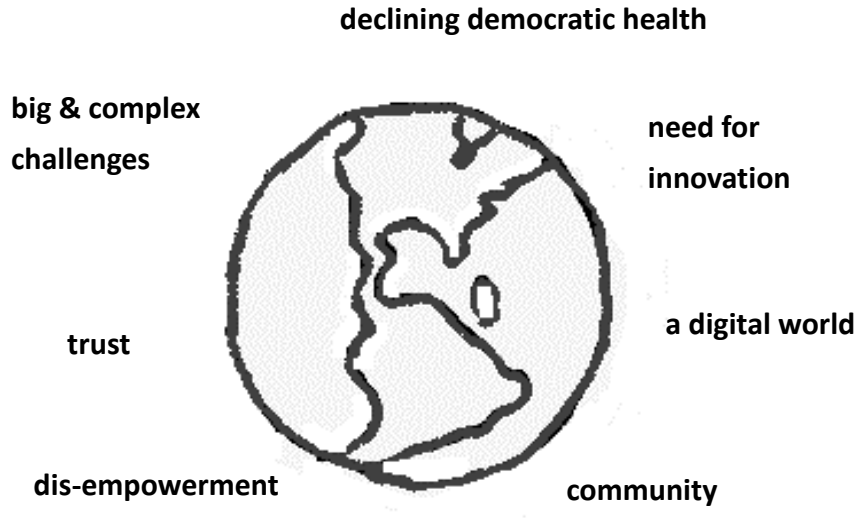
On the community front, there is also a lack of civic connection, belonging and participation. In his seminal book *Bowling Alone* (2000), Robert Putnam argues that many people are disengaging from civil life; they're staying away from the polls and from traditional civic organizations and social groups.

Community Foundations Canada, in exploring belonging and participation across the country, has found that 38% of Canadians don't feel they have a stake in their community, and only half feel that being involved in community events or activities is important in their day-to-day lives (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017). And our always-connected, high-paced age isn't helping. The challenge of juggling everything in daily life is overwhelming, and we are becoming more and more fragmented, hardly knowing our neighbours (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017). It will be interesting to watch if things change in the current COVID-19 pandemic. In some ways, it is an enforced slowing down, and there is evidence of neighbourliness all around (as well as a widening digital divide).

Over 70% of Canadians agree that people are less connected to their communities than in previous generations, according to a public opinion poll of 1,200 Canadians (Volunteer Canada, 2017). However, 65% feel they have a responsibility to those who may need help in the community and over half want to have a voice in shaping the community they live in. This is echoed in the UK, where only 3% of people are involved in neighbourhood projects, though 60% would like to be (Participatory City, 2019). Declining involvement, connection and agency all feed negatively reinforcing cycles of participation. The economically disempowered, in particular, are feeling disillusioned and forgotten, with little sense of agency or voice. With limited resources and technology access, they become further alienated. Whether people are privileged or not, all of this is feeding more public disenchantment, cynicism and declining participation.

With all of these realities and others at play, as seen in Figure 1, effective civic participation and engagement is more important than ever—finding ways to expand and deepen the way residents participate and become valued actors in their communities, working together, and with other stakeholders for a better future.

Figure 1
A World of Big Challenges Today



Civic engagement is key

Today, more than ever, civic participation and engagement are crucial. Municipal leaders, the not-for-profit sector and community members alike are recognizing the value of residents working together, alongside other actors, to develop and act on solutions for tough challenges and to produce valuable benefits through the process as well (City of Victoria, 2012; Gordon, 2016; Hardy, 2019a; Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020).

In their report, "Global Answers to Local Problems," Hollie Russon Gilman and Elena Souris (2020) note that

> decades of political and social science research have shown that civic engagement can help address the kinds of abstract problems like low trust and satisfaction with government. In addition, giving more opportunity for democratic participation can help policymakers identify gaps in programs or address challenges experienced by residents that often aren't heard through traditional political participation avenues. As a result, they can produce better policy to address public problems. Finally, a civic engagement-based approach to governance can empower residents in a more inclusive way. (p. 8)

A thriving democratic culture depends on engagement, says Robin Bachin (2018): "Civic engagement is the foundation of a democratic society" (para. 3). There are two related but often competing components to a democracy: individual liberty and the public good. An effective balance is found when people take an active role in shaping their communities. Recently, The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) itself launched the new "Innovative Citizen Participation" project, with a focus on deliberative (citizen engagement) processes. In reviewing a host of studies on these approaches, it identifies the potential that institutionalized deliberative processes "have the potential to help address some of the key drivers of democratic malaise: giving voice and agency to a much wider range of citizens; rebuilding trust in government, and leading to more legitimate and effective public decision-making" (OECD, 2020, p. 3). Dave Meslin, author of *Teardown: Rebuilding Democracy From the Ground Up,* believes that that our democracy requires a radical overhaul and that it should be rebuilt with a focus on accessibility, inclusion and participation. He boldly declares that

> we need a political uprising of passionate activists and leaders, prepared to prescribe and implement surgical interventions that will change the tone, shape and nature of power. Ours is a battle for inclusive governance, for deliberative and thoughtful decision-making.... It's a fight to inject some humanity into our democracy, for a new culture of political engagement and for decentralized and participatory local government, throwing open the doors to a system that is currently designed as an insider's game. (Meslin, 2019, para. 14)

Especially in cities and their communities, civic participation offers promise in rebuilding severed ties between community members and their government (Hollie Russon Gilman & Elena Souris, 2020). It is

at the local level, where policies are more tangible and practical and impact the everyday lives of citizens, that we can start. “Citizen participation on a local level is the perfect gateway to rebuilding trust” (Lodewijckx, 2020b, sec. “A local approach”).

Strong civic participation has the potential to reverse some of the concerning trends, to change the conversation, to set new patterns and to create stronger communities. Josh Carpenter highlights the importance like this: “Civic engagement is important because ultimately, it’s the best version of every single person in the community” (Aspen Institute, 2018, para. 1).

A changing landscape

In recent years, there has been a growing shift toward engagement approaches that are more meaningful, impactful and collaborative. Building on the challenges highlighted in Figure 1, these powerful factors are driving changes in contemporary engagement (IAP2 Australasia, 2019):

- The level of connectedness that exists in communities
- Greater access to information
- Increased visibility
- Increased pressure to deliver value for money
- Complex or “wicked” problems
- Commercial pressure to innovate
- Mobility affecting pace and form of communication

Additionally, there are shifts in thinking about citizenship—from a consumer or user mindset to thinking of citizens as partners and active members of society (Thomas, 2013). There are some moves toward more open government and along with it an openness to inviting residents to become valued partners.

People are engaging for different reasons and in different ways. Lance Bennett notes that there is a shift away from the “dutiful” citizen toward a “self-actualizing” citizen, whose motivations are much more personal and self-directed (Gordon, 2016). People are engaging more outside traditional structures, with new forms of civic participation on the rise, as we will explore later in this report (Volunteer Canada, 2017).

Making engagement work

"Governments and industry across the globe are increasingly recognising the value of community and stakeholder engagement as an essential part of significant project planning and decision-making" (IAP2 Australasia, 2019, p. 9). This raises the questions of how to make it work and how to make it work well. With change in the wind, how can we ensure that we are tapping into the wave of citizen participation—fostering it and encouraging it in effective and meaningful ways? How might we better cultivate connection between people and encourage bottom-up action as well? What can be done to build truly powerful participation? As Eric Gordon (2016) puts it: "Despite enthusiasm for public engagement, there is no well-supported formula for how to do it effectively" (p. 1).

Before we can even begin to answer this question and discuss its related principles, success factors, barriers and bridges, it is important to explore what exactly we mean by "civic participation."

Our world needs everyone. We need ways for all people to participate, to connect and to forge better futures—together.

Part Two: The Theory of Engagement

Exploring the meaning and evolving practice of engagement

What do we mean by civic engagement?

A turbulence of terms

The definitions and terms around engagement and participation abound. Practitioners agree that there is no universally applied understanding of the terms around community engagement, creating a lot of confusion (Hardy, 2019b; Health Council of Canada, 2006; Hussey, 2020; Institute for Local Government, 2015). The language varies by jurisdiction, perspective, audience and context, with various terms often used interchangeably (Bang the Table, 2019; Social Pinpoint, 2017).

Terms for the process itself range from "consultation," "participation" and "involvement" to "deliberation," "collaboration," "empowerment" and "sustained public process." Individuals are referred to as "community," "public" or "citizen," resulting in variations like "community engagement," "civic engagement," "citizen participation," "civic participation," "public participation" and others that have evolved over time. Terms that include "participation" tend to reflect approaches that involve at least some initiation from citizens, while "engagement" tends to refer to processes initiated by decision-makers and organizations. Which term denotes more involvement is up for debate. It is downright dizzying. Hardy notes that "perhaps the big lesson here is that we don't just assume we share the same meaning or intent when we talk about engagement" (Hardy, 2019c, para. last).

A broad definition

For the purposes of this study, I will take a broad view that encompasses the many forms of engagement and participation; reflects current trends toward dialogue, shared ownership and collaboration; and emphasizes responses to local needs and building local capability. This perspective is a genuine, deeper one with impactful outcomes and a bias to action. Additionally, it prioritizes the involvement of individuals and not just groups.

In developing my own working definition of civic engagement, I found the most inspiration in the following definitions:

> Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. (New York Times, 2020, p. 1)

> Community engagement seeks to engage the community to achieve sustainable outcomes, equitable decision-making processes, and deepen relationships and trust between government organisations and communities. (Hardy, 2019b, para. 6)

> [Community engagement is] citizens engaged in inspired action as they work and learn together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future. (Cheuy, 2018, para. 1)

> [Civic engagement means] helping people be active participants in building and strengthening their communities, whether defined as a place or a shared identity or interest. (PACE Funders, 2020b, p. 1)

Each definition offers a compelling vision for engagement. I will be using the following merged version as a guiding definition (based on the Tamarack and Hardy definitions above):

> **Civic engagement seeks to engage the community to achieve sustainable outcomes, equitable decision-making processes, and deepen relationships and trust within communities and between communities and institutions. In practice, it is people working collaboratively, through inspired action and learning, to create and realize bold visions for their common good.**

Not just for citizens

With its significant immigrant and refugee population, Canada favours more inclusive terms like "community" or "civic" over "citizen" (Bang the Table, 2019). In this report, I will primarily use "people" and "resident" interchangeably to refer to those who live or work in a city but do not necessarily hold legal citizenship status (Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020). I will favour "a civic engagement-based approach to governance [that] can empower residents in a more inclusive way, regardless of their legal status as citizens, ability to vote, or access to resources" (Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020, p. 8).

Engagement in other sectors

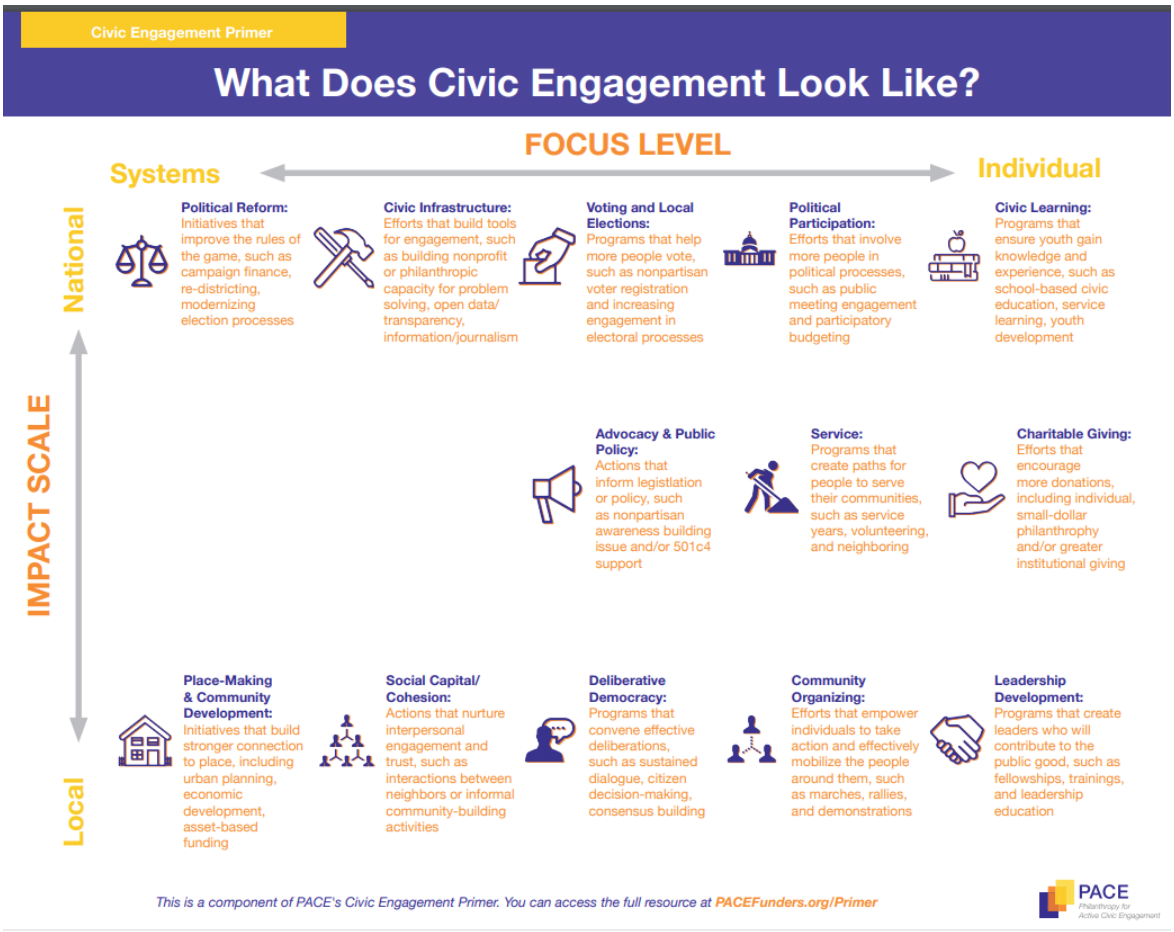
It is important to note that terms such as "civic" and "public" have their baggage (Hardy, 2019b). The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement warns that we should not look into the definition of public engagement too narrowly: "Public engagement is a term that is widely used in a variety of sectors, from arts and heritage to science policy and local government" (Social Pinpoint, 2017, "Public participation" section). Marketing in particular may use terms like "community engagement" to describe brand-building, rather than the type of engagement we are exploring here (Schram, 2018).

Many facets of civic engagement

Civic engagement can take many forms that vary depending on focus and mindset. The reasons why engagement is happening and related objectives and goals (whether short or long-term) can all affect the particular form of civic engagement. Additionally, some forms of engagement are more reactive, while others take a more proactive stance. The Civic Engagement Primer (Figure 2) developed by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE) describes various forms of engagement ranging from systems-level to individual and from local to national (PACE Funders, 2020a). This report focuses primarily on the two lower levels, local and above.

Figure 2

Civic Engagement Comes in Many Forms



Note. This illustrates the many variations in engagement, depending on impact scale and focus level. Reprinted from *The Civic Engagement Primer* by PACE Funders, retrieved from http://www.pacefunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Civic-Engagement-Chart.pdf. Copyright 2020 by PACE.

Residents involve themselves in the civic and political life of their community in broad and diverse ways (Institute for Local Government, 2015). Involvement can range from political activities and collective action such as lobbying, voting and demonstrating to volunteering, community service and philanthropic action (Mcaweeney, 2017; PACE Funders, 2020a). Locally, people can be involved formally and informally through activities like attending community or neighbourhood meetings, helping with community projects, supporting neighbours and sharing responsibilities (e.g., neighbourhood watch). Even being aware of issues and analyzing the systemic dynamics and structures can be considered civic engagement (Bachin, 2018).

Who leads, who acts?

Over recent decades, there has been a significant shift in thinking about community engagement. Assumptions that engagement should be led only by governments or organizations are giving way to a recognition that engagement may also be initiated or even led by the community itself, with a more horizontal or grassroots approach (IAP2 Australasia, 2019; Lodewijckx, 2019). Residents themselves are mobilizing to create better communities (Hussey, 2020). Today, even the private sector may take the lead. CitizenLab also distinguishes between top-down approaches by public decision-makers to intentionally involve citizens and bottom-up approaches initiated by citizens themselves (Lodewijckx, 2019).

Australasia's Community Engagement Model in Figure 3 (IAP2 Australasia, 2019) illustrates the range of approaches well, reflecting whether community or organization leads or acts or a combination of them.

Figure 3

Community Engagement Model: Different Approaches to Engagement

Note. Adapted from *Quality Assurance Standard for Community and Stakeholder Engagement* by IAP2 Australasia (2019), retrieved from https://organizingengagement.org/models/quality-assurance-standard-for-community-and-stakeholder-engagement/.

The vertical and horizontal dimensions of engagement are both important, and they need to work in tandem. Typically initiated by institutions (e.g., government), vertical engagement tends to focus on projects or statutory requirements and is more formal and authority-based. Horizontal (peer) engagement, on the other hand, tends to be more informal and is born out of shared identities and common interests (e.g., in the local community) that can produce local engagement initiatives with a focus on issues or challenges. Vertical and horizontal engagement are not mutually exclusive; the two approaches can support and reinforce each other. However, the approaches and expectations around engagement can differ, causing some challenges when the two dimensions interact.

It is important to note that civic engagement focuses on the needs of the community and the public good, rather than on specific individual needs (Thomas, 2013). Residents—not only their representatives—are directly involved in policy or program development (Sheedy, 2008). Engagement with other stakeholders is also an important and complementary aspect of decision-making and implementation. Stakeholders might include local businesses, institutions, experts, and governments. The contributions of engaged residents on a project or initiative will likely need to be balanced with the interests of other actors in the system as part of the larger decision-making process.

An evolving world of civic engagement

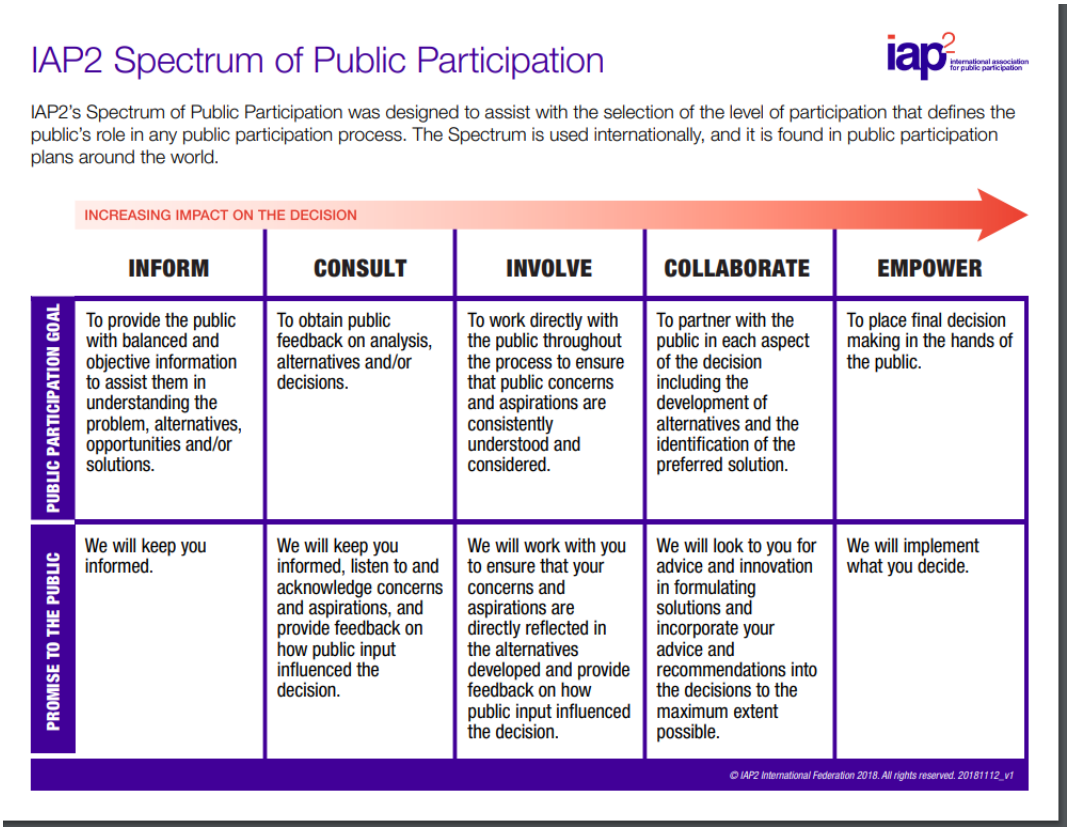
IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

The roots of how we think about civic participation today can be traced to the 1960s, when movements to address bias and elitism in the system brought in better representation in the process (Thomas, 2013). Since then, many governments have institutionalized public engagement, or at least consultation, making it a requirement in many planning and policy decisions.

One of the key resources that engagement practitioners worldwide look to is the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, a conceptual framework developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) in the late 1990s (Hussey, 2019). Different levels of involvement in decision-making processes are illustrated in the spectrum seen in Figure 4 (IAP2, 2020).

Figure 4

The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Note. Reprinted with permission from *Core Values, Ethics, Spectrum – The 3 Pillars of Public Participation* by the International Association of Public Participation. Retrieved from https://www.iap2.org/page/pillars. Copyright 2018 by IAP2 International Federation.

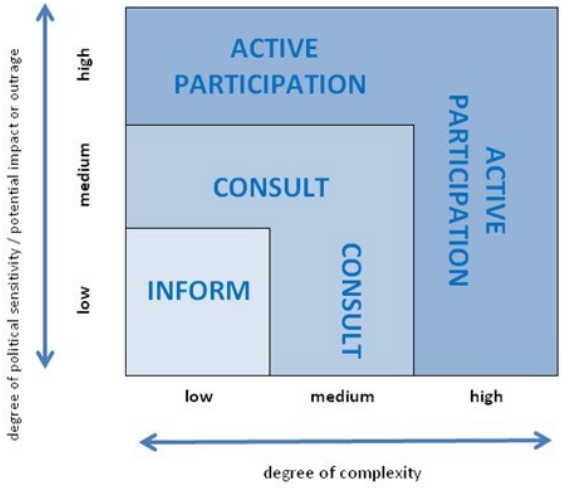
While the spectrum is useful, it has its limitations in understanding participation and engagement holistically. First, the "inform" level, when taken alone, can largely be seen as a public relations (or tokenistic) exercise, in which engagement (if it can be called that) is being done *to* the public. There is a "commonplace blurring of the two separate actions: outreach and engagement. Letting people know about what you're doing through outreach is not the same thing as involving people in doing things together through engagement," reflects Eric Gordon (2016, p. 10). With no opportunity to contribute or influence, informing alone may even feed a negative cycle of cynicism and disengagement. The "inform" level is certainly important, but it might be better positioned as a foundation across all levels and stages (Roy McCallum, 2017).

A second limitation of the IAP2 model is that it gives no indication of when to use what approach or level. For simple or technical issues, where options are limited and the public cannot (or should not)

influence a decision (e.g., a decision about infrastructure), facilitating engagement does not necessarily make sense, and informing with a little bit of consultation may be exactly right. However, as issues become more complex, contentious or emotional, deeper engagement is called for. Figure 5 illustrates one way to map the IAP2 levels based on the context, which includes the degree of risk, sensitivity and impact as well as the degree of complexity. Other models consider when the different levels of participation are warranted and legitimate based on factors such as goals, time frames, resources and levels of influence in the decision to be made (IAP2 Australasia, 2019, p. 11). It should be noted, however, that if limited resources of time and investment for engagement result in a less impactful approach, it may actually result in much higher costs in the long run, especially in a context with high complexity and potential impact.

Figure 5

Guidelines for When Different Engagement Levels are Appropriate



Note. Reprinted from *Re-imaging the IAP2 Spectrum* by Stephani Roy McCallum (2017). Retrieved from https://medium.com/@RedheadSteph/re-imagining-the-iap2-spectrum-9d24afdc1b2e.

A third limitation of the IAP2 spectrum is that it comes from the viewpoint of the sponsor or decision-maker—the power-holder. This can be highly challenging for many groups and cultures (Roy McCallum, 2017). It holds a delegated decision-making perspective that does not jibe with empowerment as understood in the community development model (McKinlay, 2020). Even at the "empower" level, the institution remains the solution implementer, and the public are the recipients. The spectrum doesn't ask whether the community wants anything implemented or who should do it. Letting the community identify what matters to them and how they want to engage better empowers them as the decision-makers (Roy McCallum, 2017).

Additionally, if leaders want to truly achieve the goals of participation, they will need to focus not only on planning and strategy, as in the IAP2 spectrum, but also on outcomes, with accompanying accountability and evaluation (A. Davis & Andrew, 2017). A broader framework and approach would be needed when considering engagement that involves broader systems-level change, capacity and/or relationship building (Bennett, 2017; Hardy, 2019b).

While the IAP2 is a solid starting point to consider in planning and decision-making, practitioners should know its limitations. They should also consider additional, newer perspectives, mindsets and approaches that address some of the concerns with the IAP2 model.

New perspectives

The concepts of what engagement can and should be are in flux. Past models have sometimes set up more confrontational models, and there is a shift toward more collaborative, cooperative, partnership-based views, as rooted in Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation (Case et al., 2019). Recent interviews with 36 municipal leaders in the United States revealed an emerging desire to "seek more authentic ways to engage with citizens" (Miller & Taylor, 2020). There are shifts in how decisions are made and how issues are tackled, with an increasing focus on the necessity of impactful engagement.

The view of residents as potential partners in design and implementation is pushing engagement even further. This perspective has long characterized grassroots efforts and volunteering, but it is newer in the public consultation sphere. As Eric Gordon notes, there has recently been "a qualitative shift in methods and process both in how communities organize and mobilize, and how government listens and collaborates" (Gordon, 2016, p. 8). There is a move to engage constituents directly in the planning and implementation of services and programs, sometimes called co-production. Codesign and coproduction can be seen as levels beyond empowerment, with the community contributing to ongoing service delivery as (*Co-Production - Social Innovation Generation*, n.d.; Participatory City, 2019).

Action-focused trends in participation are exemplified in projects such as those launched by the Participatory City Foundation. As Tessy Britton, Chief Executive of the Foundation, states,

> Current models for encouraging citizens to participate in civic life are geared around citizens influencing decision-making or service delivery rather than individually or collectively making change themselves. But this needs to change; participation must enable citizens to take action, rather than just have a conversation. (Participatory City, 2019b, pt. short video)

Some residents are participating in civic life by initiating and controlling initiatives they define themselves (as seen in the engagement model in Figure 3), sometimes getting things done better and more effectively with minimal government involvement (Social Pinpoint, 2017). Tapping into today's

entrepreneurial spirit, people are creating their own solutions, away from traditional volunteering and formal engagement (Volunteer Canada, 2017). During the global COVID-19 pandemic crisis in 2020, for example, we saw people rising to the challenge of being involved, with initiatives like #caremongering and ad hoc neighbourhood mobilization (Cressy, 2020).

On a related front, cities around the world are experiencing a surge of citizen-engagement activities through various forms of DIY urbanism, complementing a renewed emphasis on participatory, people-centred urban planning (Sawhney et al., 2015). Also called "tactical urbanism," this trend influences how people may think about how to be involved in their cities, and it can have a big impact, especially on public spaces.

Emerging themes in engagement

There are a number of key themes woven through these and other emerging perspectives on engagement, nudging new paradigms around engagement and democracy, as described below.

It's about dialogue

If one thing rings particularly loud and clear in the emerging perspectives on engagement, it's the emphasis on dialogue. Deliberation, listening and two-way respectful conversation are key, whether amongst community members or between community members and decision-makers. As Grayce Liu argues, "for engagement to really have an impact, it needs to be an ongoing dialogue and not just a one-off letter or public comment" (2018).

> When done well, these techniques create the space for real dialogue, so everyone who shows up can tell their story and share their perspective on the topic at hand. Dialogue builds trust and enables people to be open to listening to perspectives that are very different from their own. Deliberation is key to public engagement work as well, enabling people to discuss the consequences, costs, and trade-offs of various policy options, and to work through the emotions that tough public decisions raise. (National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010, p. 1)

It's participatory

Another emerging engagement theme is a definite move toward a more participatory approach. Deeper engagement positions participants as valued partners who have ownership and take leadership of a direction, course of action or decision (City of Atlanta, 2016; Smilt_gse827, 2010). People want to influence and design solutions, collaborating with others (McKinlay, 2020; Shaw & Crozier, 2018; Stuart, 2012; Tamarack Institute, 2020b; J. C. Thomas, 2013). Models are moving away from "power over" and toward "power with," giving the community decision-making authority (Bovaird, 2007; Thomas, 2013). Gordon (2016) calls it a "meaningful inefficiency, where government systems are designed such that users have the option to play within and with rules, not simply to play out prescribed tasks" (p. 19).

It's about empowerment

Participatory mindsets have naturally lead to another important theme: engagement that empowers (Sheedy, 2008; Tamarack Institute, 2020). With an emphasis on the sharing of power comes sharing of—or even delegation of—decision-making power, where citizens have real influence on outcomes or decisions. As Sally Hussey notes, "[it is] the democratic idea that everyone who is affected by an issue that impacts their community should have a say in the decision making around it" (2020, para. 1). With this comes ownership and a new role for residents, as producers of outcomes, not just recipients of them (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). The Participatory City model, in particular, is focused almost entirely on this empowerment theme; it reflects a belief that "what people do together every day matters" (Participatory City, 2019, p. 11).

It's about context expertise

Another core idea or theme coming to the fore in civic engagement is a recognition of the value of "lived experience" and "living experience." This is the idea that people in a community are the best people to understand their own reality, as they have firsthand experience of the issues, the history, the challenges and opportunities (Attygalle, 2017; Nallamothu, 2019). There is a movement toward valuing "context experts" as much or even more than "content experts". It also means putting citizens and their capabilities at the epi-centre (PACE Funders, 2020c).

It's about local needs and aspirations

Closely related to the "context expertise" theme, there is an increasingly human-centred focus on people's hopes and dreams, lived experience and on-the-ground knowledge. "Good services are gonna be what people want or what people need. The only way to understand what people need is to include them in the process of designing and implementing those services. Otherwise, you're approaching it from the deficit perspective, which history's shown doesn't quite work out that well" (Gordon, 2016, p. 13). This means considering all kinds of expertise and looking at situations from a variety of perspectives (Bachin, 2018). It also means understanding what behaviour and what motivates people (see Appendix A). Nicole Swerhun comments that "successful consultation relies on the belief that people are capable of understanding the condition of their lives" (Case et al., 2019).

> Part of what it means to effectively identify the value of a project is to consider the motivations and rewards for every person involved, from decision-makers to supporters and staff. (Gordon, 2016, p. 48)

It's about the process *and* the results

Depending on the situation, engagement can have goals related to both the process and the outcomes (Capire Consulting Group, 2015; Hardy, 2019b). Ensuring a focus on the "why" for the engagement—the end goal—will go a long way to ensuring effective engagement and understanding what defines success (Gordon, 2016; IAP2 Australasia, 2019). Articulating and understanding the primary and secondary purpose of a particular participation project is ideally done as a collective effort. At the same time, ensuring a robust process to engage people as valued partners is also important. This means deciding the strategy to achieve the goals and the steps to get there. Together, these two goal areas can create a holistic approach for any engagement effort.

It's iterative

Adopting a "design-thinking lens," with cycles of iteration and development, is a key theme for contemporary engagement efforts (Davis & Andrew, 2017; Gordon, 2016; Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020). Just as design has shifted from a "design-for" to a "design-with" mindset, so too is engagement moving toward a "design-with" approach. This means bringing in the public throughout the process by way of continued engagement and feedback loops. It means learning along the way, adjusting and pivoting as needed. As in design, this does not mean engaging at just one or two moments, once a project has been decided (the traditional decide-announce-defend cycle). Rather, it is a facilitated process (not necessarily linear) that invites meaningful participation through cycles of problem identification, strategy, implementation and evaluation, with further refining along the way. "At its core," argue Phillips and Orsini, "citizen engagement refers to public participation that is characterized by 'interactive and iterative processes of deliberation among citizens (and sometimes organizations), and between citizens and government officials'" (Health Council of Canada, 2006, p. 11).

It's ongoing

Linked to this are the approaches that or more ongoing, looking at deeper systemic challenges and sustainable outcomes (Hardy, 2019b; Institute for Local Government, 2015). This represents a movement away from the simple, transactional one-project-one-process approach into long-term problem-solving and into an approach with ongoing interaction between governments and citizens (Health Council of Canada, 2006). Roy McCallum (2017) asks what would happen if we focused on the whole picture, putting less emphasis on a project by project approach and instead, putting more emphasis on community building, long-term sustainability and working together within the system.

It's about relationships

Ongoing engagement means that building relationships is core—fostering an ethic of reciprocity and a culture of collaboration (Bachin, 2018). Stakeholders need to get to know each other, to listen and build empathy, in order to create sustainable, long-term impact. We must be clear that it is individuals who collaborate, not organizations, based on common purpose and trust (Duncan, 2016). A focus on the

short-term—on efficiency and measurement—can detract from long-term relationship building (Gordon, 2016). We want to create a space "where relationships are built, connection is fostered, and people move forward together, whether they agree or not" (Roy McCallum, 2017).

> We need to instantiate a "caring-for" civics. This is an approach to civic life that is fundamentally relational, where public institutions create value systems and metrics that support long-term relationship building in addition to short-term attention. (Gordon, 2016, p. 55)

It's about belonging

There is a growing realization in the civic engagement field that belonging, community capital and social capital are closely tied to participation and can be antidotes to fragmentation and polarization. Belonging is both a personal and community struggle for connection, and it is a foundation for participation (Block, 2000). Fostering belonging helps people move beyond their individual mindsets toward a collective one, and participation can likewise nurture belonging and community. "Without a shift in trust, social capital, belonging and relatedness... our capacity to solve problems [or] organize work effectively is greatly diminished" (Block, p. 189). Appendix A further elaborates on belonging.

> The core of people-centred practice is facilitating a sense of belonging. From belonging comes a context for our lives, our sense of accountability to those we live alongside, and an understanding of our rights. Resident-led civic engagement builds off these things and opens up opportunities for community members and agencies to act collectively. (Nallamothu, 2019, para. 16)

Part Three: Challenges and Opportunities in Engagement

Considering the multifaceted obstacles to—and benefits of—engagement

Barriers and challenges in participation and engagement

Authentic civic engagement is evolving into a powerful opportunity with great promise for our communities and society, as we will soon explore. However, there is a wide range of barriers and challenges that restrict the ability to realize these benefits. On several levels, from the practical to the very mindsets and paradigms people hold, these factors must be considered in crafting and stewarding any engagement effort.

Practical matters

Some of the key obstacles to civic engagement fall into the realm of accessibility and availability. Engagement timing can be challenging, especially for those with limited resources and busy lives. Involvement might mean missing work or finding eldercare or childcare (Sisson, 2020; Thomas, 2018). Locations may be difficult to get to or not accessible by transit or for those with disabilities; this affects already-marginalized groups especially, alienating them from the process (Gordon, 2016).
Efforts to engage people deeply and holistically must recognize that there are limits to what people can do, even if they want to (Weaver, 2019). Dave Meslin describes how the most elaborate, authentic and comprehensive process becomes inaccessible to those whose voices aren't being heard (Case et al., 2019).

Many engagement efforts are moving online, at least partially, at least partially, reaching new and broader audiences and increasing access through civic tech. However, this brings new barriers for people with varying levels of technological comfort, literacy or access, especially seniors or those in poorer neighbourhoods, possibly excluding already overlooked people (Gordon, 2016).

For organizations and their staff who are planning engagement, cost and time are also cited as barriers to deeper engagement approaches (Business Lab, 2019; S. Davis, 2010; Gordon, 2016). It can be too expensive, sometimes doubling the cost of a project (J. C. Thomas, 2013). Projects are often not given adequate time to even consider an authentic engagement, and implementation can take a long time. "It often takes one to two years to complete the core planning and relationship building that are necessary to launch an initiative that features substantial community engagement" (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). Public sector teams are stretched in time and resources, even if a lack of real engagement increases costs in the long-term (Lodewijckx, 2020a).

Reducing practical barriers can enable more community members to participate—both the underrepresented and traditional opponents (Brandt et al., 2019). Broader factors in the system, like the economy, other local issues, development pressure and even the weather can also have an impact (S. Davis, 2010).

Exclusionary design

For a long time, engagement and consultation formats and approaches have favoured the privileged. They work for those comfortable making bold, sweeping statements in public, like at town halls (Sisson, 2020). They reward the typical, often older white male, homeowners, reinforcing their positions of power (Lorinc, 2019). However, they present obstacles for many who are not as comfortable in these settings, such as immigrants, renters, youth, different personalities, the vulnerable and the marginalized (City of Victoria, 2012; Gordon, 2016; Polimedio, 2017; Thomas, 2018).

Traditional, formal engagement techniques can feel intimidating (Bennett, 2017). Requiring residents to wait hours to say their piece at a meeting with "experts" in centre stage can send the message that residents should really only listen (Sisson, 2020). Residents can feel unwelcome by leaders, by approaches and even at city hall, whether intentional or not) (City of Victoria, 2012). Inviting newer residents into the conversation also presents cultural barriers; newer residents may not feel invested in a place, even when they can bring fresh, less entrenched views (Bachin, 2018).

With these factors comes the challenge of attracting a diverse and representative diversity of participants. "Civic life can be quite elitist and exclusionary, which serves to widen the gap between the rich and powerful and the poor and powerless" (Polimedio, 2017, para. 9). Without really understanding the target demographic and its needs, the ability to attract them is diminished. Engagement efforts seldom represent a good cross section of a community but instead look like an odd lot of "the curious, the fearful, and the available" (Thomas, 2013, p. 792). The already-engaged stay engaged, while others are silent or not at the table.

Capacity issues

A lack of civic literacy echoes through the literature as a key barrier in engagement. People don't really understand government—its processes, roles and governing systems (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016; City of Victoria, 2012; S. Davis, 2010; Miller & Taylor, 2020; Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020). A lack of civic literacy (civic skills and knowledge) is a key obstacle to being involved (Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, 2012; Keilburger & Keilburger, 2017). Whether real or perceived, poor civic literacy impacts people's ability to have fruitful conversations and contribute meaningfully, which can cause engagement to falter. (Bennett, 2017).

With low civic literacy comes a lack of knowledge or awareness of opportunities to get involved (City of Victoria, 2012). Residents aren't always committed to, or interested in, learning about issues and public

affairs (Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, 2012; Liu, 2018). When residents are committed, they aren't necessarily given the information they need, from the background, context and key considerations to the trade-offs, challenges and constraints (S. Davis, 2010; Roy McCallum, 2017). Residents may also have limited capacity and skills to navigate the process, understand the information, and participate constructively. We all need to understand, and experience, what makes a good conversation.

People struggle with knowing how and where to engage, and organizations don't necessarily do what they can to communicate effectively to reach the right audiences with the right information. Transparency can be an issue, and so can confusing, technical language (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016). In a world of social media, inaccurate information can skew thinking and mindsets. This can inhibit fruitful and collaborative processes and push people further into their filter bubbles, and it has the potential to cause more harm than help (Miller & Taylor, 2020; Polimedio, 2017). Inaccessible methods for engagement may also widen the gap between the rich and the poor and affect how people engage (Polimedio, 2017).

As discussed, there is also no clear language around engagement. This can lead to misunderstanding and unrealistic or mismatched expectations (Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020). At times, a level of power and influence is promised that will not, or cannot, be acted on. This can feed cycles of frustration, as leaders may be only requesting limited input, whereas citizens seek more partnership (Polimedio, 2017; Smilt_gse827, 2010). Even when one is clear about expectations and what is up for influence and within an institution's control, this does not mean this is acceptable to participants—you can not tell others what their expectations should be (Roy McCallum, 2017). The conversation you are having is not necessarily the one the participants want to have.

On the organizational side, staff may be inexperienced in effective engagement and lack the knowledge and the ability to deliver impactful initiatives (Business Lab, 2019; Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016). Bringing engagement online can further magnify the challenge, as staff may experience barriers in terms of technological capability. We must build the capacity of everyone, nurturing the skills and knowledge that are needed for these conversations.

> On the government side, the city staffers or government staff don't understand concepts of civic engagement. When you join a department, you have to take ethics training and sexual harassment training. Those are mandated, but there's nothing about what it means to be a good public servant and what civic engagement is, even though that goes hand-in-hand with your work here. So, oftentimes you see a lot of policies that are established because people are not thinking about how to engage with the public or how the public sees something. (Liu, 2018, "Where is civic engagement most difficult" section)

A related challenge is how to prioritize when to do what kind of engagement to best use limited resources, knowing you can't do it all (City of Victoria, 2012; S. Davis, 2010). And for some, being given only a limited scope from the institution makes it that much harder (Gordon, 2016). Siloed departments can create inconsistent and uncoordinated engagement, consultation fatigue and confusion (City of Victoria, 2012).

Psychological and emotional hurdles

It will come as no surprise that one of the key barriers to engagement is eroding trust, as cited by virtually everyone who is exploring engagement field. The trust issue starts to get to the root of some of the psychological and emotional barriers to participation.

The "SCARF" model outlined in the article "Turf, Trust, Co-Creation and Collective Impact" is helpful in understanding the neuroscience of trust (Weaver, 2019). The model outlines five domains of social rewards and threats. Weaver explains how the brain perceives these social rewards and threats similarly to physical ones, impacting our ability to make decisions, solve problems or collaborate effectively. In other words, threats in these domains decrease trust and therefore engagement:

Status: *One's relative importance to others.* While civic engagement is meant to guarantee a voice for all, it has often evolved into "a kind of oppressive NIMBYism that grew up around the confrontational nature of planning applications" (Lorinc, 2019). Power imbalances create barriers for the powerless while reinforcing the power of the privileged (Gordon, 2016). Bias and exclusion in the system create even more barriers, further marginalizing groups who aren't invited to the table (City of Victoria, 2012). Non-citizens especially, with their fears around legal status, are careful in how they choose to engage and what places feel safe (Lee, 2019).

Certainty: *Being able to predict the future.* There is a lack of trust in the process itself. Disillusionment and wariness reduce people's sense of seeing a future or having any control (Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, 2012; S. Davis, 2010). When engagement is tokenistic (or perceived to be) and the choices being offered are only marginal or late in the process, cynicism, resentment and skepticism grow, and the motivation to engage ebbs (Bennett, 2017; City of Victoria, 2012; Gordon, 2016; Miller & Taylor, 2020). When past experiences have been poor ones, when there has been little follow-through, impact or action, this further erodes confidence in leaders to truly listen or in the value of the process (Attygalle, 2017; S. Davis, 2010; Gordon, 2016; Weaver, 2019). How can people feel certain about a future they have helped shape when previous experiences tell them otherwise?

Autonomy*: A sense of control over events.* Perceptions and experiences that minimize a sense of influence over outcomes weaken the sense of autonomy and power. Some people lack confidence, not even believing in themselves to bring value to a project (Case et al., 2019). A mantra of "we will fix you," along with chronic reporting of bad news about poorer neighbourhoods, can also reinforce this sense of

deficit rather than strength, weakening participation and reinforcing feelings of inadequacy (Bennett, 2017; Gordon, 2016). On the flip side, a general apathy toward participating in civic life is a key obstacle in improving engagement (Putnam, 2000). "Reducing the cost of participation is key. But that isn't helping people get interested" notes Katherine Einstein, going on to argue that "a more convenient time isn't going to solve the interest part of the equation" (Sisson, 2020, para. 14).

Relatedness: *A sense of safety with others.* Poor relationships hinder engagement as well, including relationships with institutions (vertical) and within the community (horizontal). A lack of civility, with cycles of division and a hostile rhetoric of "me vs. everyone else," of winners and losers, sets things up for a fight rather than cooperation (Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, 2012; Davis, 2010; Miller & Taylor, 2020). This adversarial climate of fractured communication fosters protection of self-interest and turf, rather than openness to alternate points of view, inhibiting fruitful engagement (Mastronardi & Pedersen, 2017; Weaver, 2019). Weakened social networks and social capital further erode a sense of trust in others (see Appendix A for more on social capital).

Strained relations with institutions also restrict engagement and that sense of safety (Miller & Taylor, 2020). If residents feel that leaders aren't truly listening, due to lack of feedback and follow-up, the trust in relationship erodes (Sisson, 2020). While a meaningful process can build trust with those who participate, it doesn't necessarily translate to the general public (Roy McCallum, 2017). Leaders themselves also have their sense of safety threatened, with meetings attracting "citizens against virtually everything" (CAVE) (Case et al., 2019). Many leaders fear that people will demand things that can't be realized (Lodewijckx, 2020a). They do, however, believe that the anger they face from the public is rooted in disappointment, frustration, and a hunger for a greater sense of humanity." (Miller & Taylor, 2020).

> There is a fear in leaders of stepping into a conversation they can't control—and yet the best conversations are the ones you can't control—that's a tension that is hard to wrap your mind around. (S. Roy McCallum, personal communication, Apr. 8, 2020)

Fairness: *A perception of fair exchanges between people.* Often, a small-but-loud minority of people can exert unfair influence in a process, almost "ambushing" folks at events like town halls (Miller & Taylor, 2020). In many cases, those in the room or online do not accurately represent the local demographic, including the silent majority, the marginalized, and the vulnerable; this magnifies existing inequalities (City of Victoria, 2012; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). People are not empowered equally. At times, diverse groups activists feel ignored when expressing concerns, while the vocal minority unfairly prevents social initiatives (Brandt et al., 2019; Sisson, 2020). More participation doesn't necessarily result in equal participation (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016, para. 9).

The matter of mindsets

And now, we come to the heart of the matter: the driving mindsets and mental models in the system of engagement. We have already explored some of the emerging themes that would be part of a supportive mindset. However, alternative mindsets and paradigms present significant barriers in achieving active and meaningful engagement.

"Institutions should make the decisions" is one model prevalent in the civic engagement world, holding it back from new ways of doing things (Business Lab, 2019). Whether the power is held by leaders of large institutions, public officials or funders, the mindset is that it is those leaders' role to make the decisions about what to do and how to do it—the community member is there to receive it (Davis, 2010; Miller & Taylor, 2020). People are treated as passive objects rather than subjects in shaping their futures (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). The common rhetoric about involving people in decision-making boils down to only engaging them in marginal choices, while the real decisions are clearly being made somewhere else (Bennett, 2017, p. 279). These entrenched top-down approaches see institutions choosing approaches so that they can retain control of the conversation and the decisions (Roy McCallum, 2017). "*How* policymakers and other social change leaders pursue initiatives will determine whether those efforts succeed. If they approach such efforts in a top-down manner, they are likely to meet with failure" (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016, para. 9).

"Experts know best" is another aspect of current mindsets that can limit engagement. A community member recalls how her mayor communicated "in a paternal way: 'I know better than you what you need. I will make things better for you. Trust me.' The problem is that they didn't trust us" (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016, "The need for" section). This mindset views the public as children, rather than trusted partners. People of diversity may be invited to be involved in a final project but are not invited to lead, have a voice or move to self-determination (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). You can see this often in how institutions and funders impose predetermined solutions, outcomes or expectations on participants, merely asking for validation, not dialogue (Bennett, 2017; Roy McCallum, 2017). A defensive posture results in the common design/announce/defend approach. "Doing to us, not with us, is a recipe for failure," explains an experienced public leader (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016).

> A real barrier is the mindset that whoever is leading is the expert, rather than the community, their lived experience being the expertise. (S. Roy McCallum, personal communication, Apr. 8, 2020)

"It doesn't have value" is another mental model or mindset that creates barriers to implementing engagement. Many politicians and planners don't believe in the value of engagement; they feel the investment isn't worth it, so practices are just done for the optics (Case et al., 2019). This feeds tokenistic patterns and encourages just "checking the box," with resistance to making it meaningful (Davis, 2010) (Roy McCallum, 2017). Processes become irrelevant when they are reduced to merely obligatory or statutory duties, rather than core, central elements (Lorinc, 2019). This way of thinking is unlikely to

achieve potential outcomes and likely to reinforce a negative cycle of cynicism and antagonism (Case et al., 2019).

Sometimes the public also believes that *"it doesn't have value."* The disillusionment and cynicism are rooted in the feeling that it isn't worth it to engage. A mental model that says, *"my voice doesn't matter,"* means that people wonder whether an organization—the outsider with power—really intends to listen and act. This will impact whether someone gets involved and, if they do, how engaged they become (Sisson, 2020). After all, if they are repeatedly asked to donate time, labour or money (which can feel just like covering budgetary or labour gaps), without their concerns or opinions being incorporated, it can feel more like exploitation than a partnership—why would they bother (Gordon, 2016)? People carry the memory of past engagements, past stories of feeling disrespected, which influences their perspective.

> It's not going to be possible to convince people who have been let down so many times that this initiative is different, that they should place their trust in this event and get their hopes up that they'll have real power to change their community, It's a real barrier everywhere, especially places that have experienced gentrification and disinvestment. (Sisson, 2020, para. 17)

Within some institutions, mindsets that say *"we've always done it this way"* further restrict the ability to innovate, be creative and try new forms of engagement. With a lack of incentives, holistic policies, internal buy-in, and freedom or time to do things differently, the message is clear to staff that real engagement isn't important (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016; Davis, 2010).

Active engagement, with its inherently collaborative and dialogue-based approach, is inhibited as well by the mental model that there are *"winners and losers."* When institutions or individuals go in thinking they have to win—conditioned to think of the issue or project as a fight—building shared and positive visions becomes very challenging, and division can be reinforced (Davis, 2010). There is a real fear of how the community will react in this age of blame, shame and polarization. There is a fear that engagement will just result in a confrontational and unproductive process.

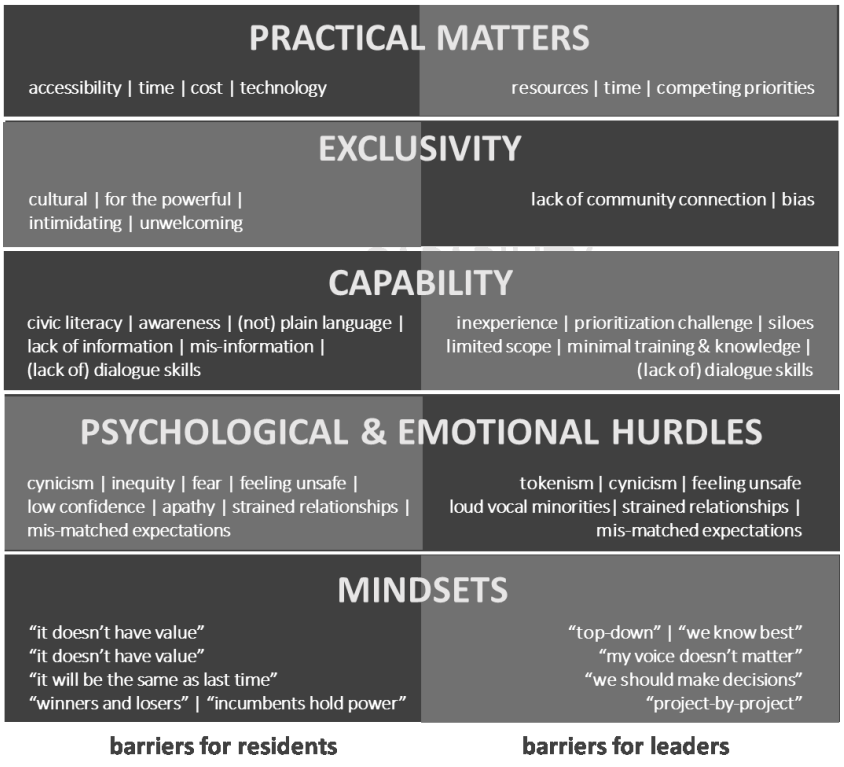
A mindset that *"engagement is project-based"* can also limit impact, particularly on the systems level, keeping projects disconnected from broader priorities (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016). This mindset makes engagement more difficult and inefficient, with significant time and recruitment each time. A focus on short-term (project-based) goals impacts the ability to achieve longer-term outcomes—a definite tension (Gordon, 2016). Moving quickly on projects runs the risk of reverting to top-down thinking, with assumptions that engagement will only slow things down (Barnes & Schmitz, 2016). The commercialization of engagement through consultants can further accentuate this challenge, with the focus on a specific project and sponsor's needs rather than on longer-term relationships and capacity building (Sisson, 2020). Grayce Liu (2018) notes that it is not like reaching "the promised land" and then resting; instead, "It's constant work, evaluating and making sure that those who want to participate have the opportunity to do so" (para. 15).

Finally, we must address the issue of the mindset that *"incumbents hold the power,"* which relates to NIMBYism (not in my backyard) in planning and development. This way of thinking, often held by privileged, is largely resistant to change, and it centres on personal interests—digging in to retain the current norms and causing gridlock in the process (Miller & Taylor, 2020). Notably, the incentive to come and oppose a new project or development is higher than to say yes to something that may address broader issues, not just local ones, as illustrated in this example (Sisson, 2020):

> Part of it comes from the way the benefits and downsides of a development are distributed. The benefits of, say, a new affordable housing project may help a citywide housing shortage, but downsides such as increased local traffic are concentrated in the immediate surrounding area, galvanizing neighbors to make their voices heard. As Williamson and Fung noted, this leads to meetings dominated by special-interest groups and those with an immediate stake in the project. That means local land use decisions, fundamental to shaping neighborhoods, don't properly reflect the will of those who live there. (Sisson, 2020, para. 6)

A range of barriers have been explored and are summarized in Figure 6. Barriers and challenges are real and need to be understood. This doesn't mean that they are insurmountable. By exploring and discussing them, we can better understand how to move forward. The more open all the actors can be, the more able we will be to achieve a host of positive outcomes for individuals, our communities and our cities.

Figure 6
Five Levels of Barriers to Engagement



The promise of participation

Authentic civic engagement as we have seen is evolving into a powerful opportunity, with great promise for our communities and society. However, in light of the many barriers and challenges to engagement we have explored, we might ask whether it is worth the investment. If we adopted the new visions of civic engagement, what might we expect to see as benefits or outcomes? What is the value of authentic engagement to the life of our communities and cities?

These are important questions to ask. In a time of limited resources, competing demands and complex challenges, it would be tempting to leave engagement to "experts" and leaders, to expedite solutions and to keep doing things the way we always have. But as Einstein said, "insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Given today's challenges and the barriers to engagement, let's focus on the positive outcomes that can result from more holistic forms of participation. A 2017 study revealed that when cities do invest the time and effort to truly engage their citizens, it can lead to "enhanced transparency, learning, shared ownership, cost- and time-saving(s), and greater long-term success" and it can generate new and creative solutions to meet the needs of citizens more effectively (Cities of Service, 2020, p. 1).

What follows is a collection of benefits from doing engagement well, gleaned from recent handbooks, case studies, resources and expert insights. These are benefits that result from the deep, authentic and meaningful engagement described earlier in the emerging themes (Part one, "New perspectives"). The collection is by no means exhaustive, but it is intended to highlight the core outcomes identified by thought leaders in this sector. Taken together, these present a host of compelling reasons that taking engagement seriously is worth it—for the short-term and the long-term.

Greater capacity and confidence

Participation helps people to become more competent, to learn and grow as leaders and trust themselves. Investing in building capacity and knowledge through the process strengthens capacity. This then reinforces more engagement of individuals and communities and fosters local decision-making and action capability.

Stronger sense of agency

Inclusive and participatory engagement sends a clear message that everyone can have a voice and role to play. When people feel valued and heard, they have a sense of both individual and collective agency—the idea that they can contribute and make a difference, and not just receive or be "done to." They feel more qualified and informed to participate. With agency can come excitement, action, creativity and happiness, which in turn can catalyze new bottom-up change.

Expanded social capital

Social capital describes our stock of connections with each other. Participation and its inherent "working together," relational ethos nurtures stronger social connections, particularly at the local or neighbourhood level. Through sustained and deeper forms of engagement, connections are built, and relationships are forged. People feel that they belong. This social capital is key to building community cohesion, establishing trust, enhancing social inclusion and creating stronger and resilient neighbourhoods that are more secure, healthy and happy (see Appendix A for more details about social capital and belonging)

Improved health

Participation and engagement bring increased physical activity and emotional support, along with decreased social isolation. These improvements foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, learning, excitement, and happiness are all connected to participation, and these factors, sometimes called "social determinants of health," contribute to improved mental and physical well-being.

Deeper collective wisdom

The heart of engagement draws on the collective wisdom of the public's lived experience and ground-level expertise and knowledge, along with their values, ideas and recommendations. This wealth of wisdom adds to a shared knowledge base and provides insights needed for sensitive, informed and appropriate solutions.

Stronger support

Through being involved in developing and implementing solutions and understanding contexts and constraints, the community will have more satisfaction and acceptance of final solutions, with less contentiousness. Ongoing communication and iteration throughout the process, highlighting how input is being included, will generate more buy-in, legitimize decisions, and decrease cynicism with the government.

Better solutions

Ultimately, effective and meaningful engagement results in more robust and powerful solutions that meet local needs more effectively. With more well-informed plans and ideas, and new and creative solutions, it helps to better address today's complex challenges resulting in more resilient impacts and outcomes. Simply put, bringing diverse stakeholders together is critical to shaping the most effective solutions possible for a better future.

> Broad civic engagement always matters because those difficult, multi-layered conversations tell us something about where we need to go. Editing city-dwellers out of the city-building process achieves precisely the opposite result. (Lorinc, 2019, para. last)

A greater sense of ownership

When they are involved in understanding local needs and designing solutions, people become more committed to the solutions in the long run. Having a place at the table invites people to take ownership of outcomes that will impact them and their neighbourhood. This shared sense of ownership nurtures a stronger stake in the community, with more commitment and responsibility.

Faster and cheaper

Practising authentic and dialogue-based engagement results in faster project implementation in the long run, with less need to revisit. It manages risk by ensuring that investments of time and money are not wasted on inappropriate solutions or failed projects. Active engagement, done early and often, draws on the diverse expertise needed and sets things up for long-term sustainability and success.

Broader community knowledge

Built into the process of engagement is the creation and sharing of information and data (experiential, quantitative or historical) about a particular issue or project or initiative. Ideally, the engagement is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills they need to contribute meaningfully. As a result, the community and agencies that are involved develop a deeper understanding of the issues at play, related elements, key stakeholders and even how decisions get made. This means more informed and capable residents.

Strengthened networks

Civic engagement involves connecting with other actors and stakeholders, and it is often embedded in larger efforts around new and continuing initiatives. Other actors may include government agencies and departments, local councils and champions, activists and grassroots groups, the not-for-profit sector, funders and even the private sector. Working together on common challenges through engagement cultivates cross-sectoral networks and long-term relationships.

Better communities

By getting residents involved in working together toward the public good, participation helps contribute to better neighbourhoods and communities. At the local level, real and lasting change happens when residents respond to identified opportunities and challenges with direct and indirect effects. Ultimately, this change is seen and felt tangibly in the lives of a community's residents who live, work and play there, leading to a better quality of life.

Improved civic society

Engagement and participation efforts serve to foster healthy civic discussion and decision-making. Residents seek common ground together and conflicts and polarization are transformed. When done early and well, this can lead to people having more of a stake in, and pride in, their community. This enhances civil society and fosters citizenship attitudes. It can foster a shift from a climate of confrontation and disillusionment to one of cooperation and democratic culture and even more political involvement.

More collaborative mindsets

Authentic community engagement and participation encourages the adoption of a more collaborative and open approach. This can be true for public sector leaders, community groups and individuals. In a time when people tend to be divided, this more intangible benefit of civic engagement is important to consider for systemic and powerful outcomes.

Increased diversity and inclusion

Powerful engagement and participation efforts allow more voices to be heard and included, especially reaching residents and minorities who don't normally get involved or heard from. This benefit is rooted in attention to this in the engagement design. These participants will feel more included and accepted, and they'll contribute important insights and action for tangible change.

Greater sustainability

Enduring success is a key priority for today and the future, one that engagement and participation can help address. Through active engagement, with its better solutions and stronger support, more sustainable projects and outcomes can be realized. This will then deepen the intended long-term impact of projects and initiatives.

More trust

Authentic engagement fosters more trust among people, and between people and the local government and institutions. Trust is built on growing relationships, listening and empathy-building. It is rooted in concepts of transparency, dialogue and collaboration. Trust is one of the core challenges highlighted by civic leaders and one of the greatest potential outcomes of healthy dialogue through engagement.

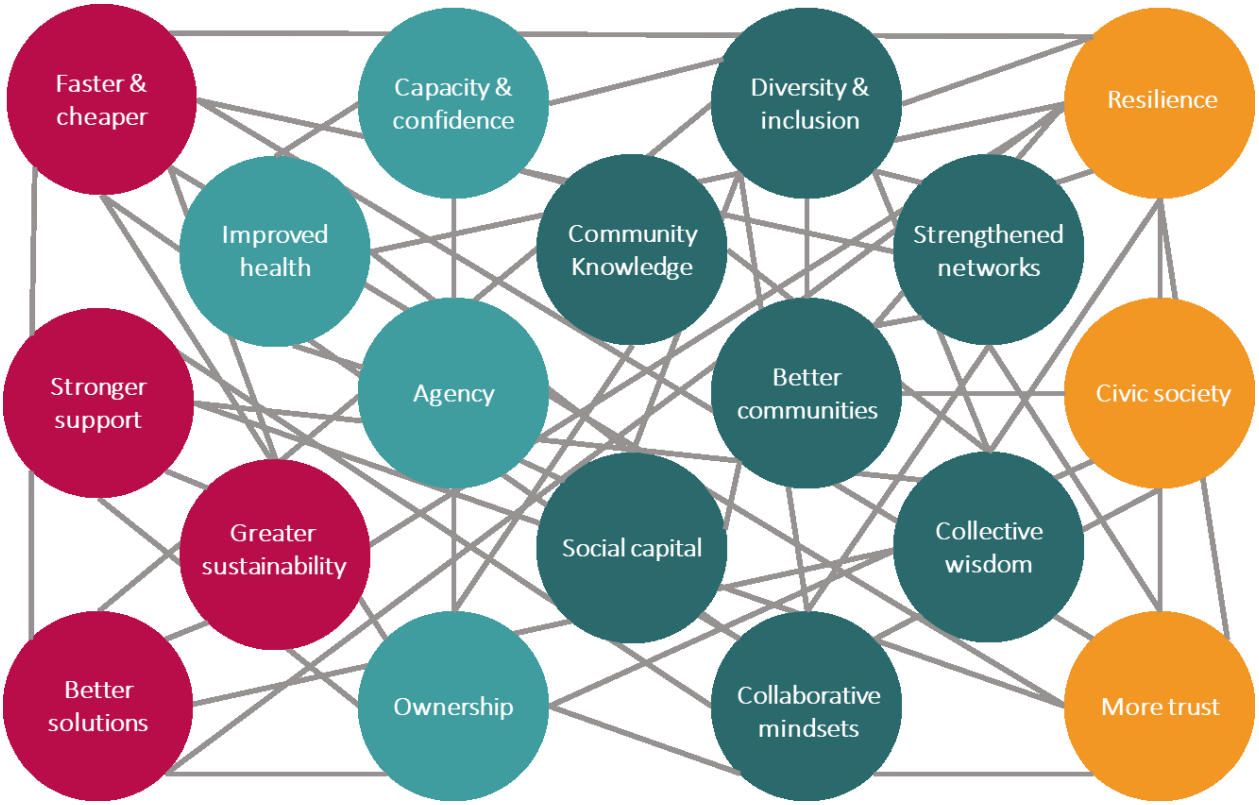
Resilience

Ultimately, many of these benefits ladder up into improved resilience—for individuals, communities and cities. More capable, collaborative and involved communities (and engagement leaders) are better able to weather the storms of today's challenges like climate change and inequality (or pandemics like COVDI-19), to thrive through change and to innovate along the way.

Realizing the benefits

As we have seen, the need for effective civic engagement is stronger than ever. There is a host of benefits to be realized by investing and committing to the approach of high-quality, effective engagement. Figure 7 captures them all in a networked system. Promising models and approaches are being developed and applied more and more in cities around the world.

Figure 7
A Web of Diverse Benefits That Come From Authentic Engagement Approaches



Note. These benefits are grouped as follows with the dark pink on the left more institutional benefits, the next ones in light blue benefits for individuals and dark blue benefits in community. The benefits on the far right in yellow are more long-term, systemic outcomes.

However, these efforts are still in the early stages in many cases, and too often, the old patterns of inauthentic engagement are being applied and reinforced. Inspiring stories and innovative projects help motivate change, but progress is being made in fits and starts. So much more could be happening.

This leaves us with the practical question of what can be done to nurture a positive, reinforcing cycle of engagement—one that leads to even more civic engagement. Pressures to change are coming from all levels within government, but often the mandates are abstract calls for "better public engagement," with little practical guidance as to how to do it (Gordon, 2016, p. 11). What are the levers for change that can help shift mindsets to foster these cycles? How can some of the barriers be tackled?

> Pressures to change are coming from all levels within government, but often the mandates are abstract calls for "better public engagement," with little practical guidance as to how to do it. (Gordon, 2016, p. 11)

Part Four: Engagement in Action

Foundations for engagement

With a host of benefits in mind, and barriers to consider, we will turn to a core question: How can we improve civic engagement and move from barriers to bridges—toward more positive outcomes and solutions?

In exploring all of these aspects of engagement and participation, it has become clear that there is a lot of good intention out there. Practitioners continue to create applied resources and toolkits that demonstrate a variety of approaches. New ones are emerging all the time, and engagement leaders dive into them, looking for the right method, the best plan for their project. "What is the way to make this engagement work best?" becomes their guiding question, and a critical one at that. These resources are all incredibly valuable, and I have compiled a list of selected ones for reference in the References section of this report.

These resources generally have a focus on the design and planning phase of public engagement, with less discussion about the implementation and evaluation phases or about the skills and knowledge for success. Some touch on principles and background along with worksheets and methods. This leads then to the question of what else is needed, or what's missing. As explored in the "Barriers and Challenges" section, mindsets and psychological and emotional barriers are at play. Tools and methods are not going to be enough to address these. If we want to truly build bridges toward authentic engagement, we must do better at investing in the foundations and shifting the underlying mindsets. Regardless of the type of engagement, this will be key for sustained progress in the world of engagement.

I offer a modest proposal here: to focus on the foundations for engagement as a starting point. By shifting some practices, the hope is to start to shift these ways of thinking:

- from apathy to **caring**
- from fear to **welcome**
- from ignored to **valued**
- from skepticism to **hope**
- from fractured to **connected**
- from power over to **power with**
- from confrontational to **collaborative**

These foundations are intended to help make explicit what is tacit. They will help people to apply many of the principles woven through the resources and pave the way for building holistic and meaningful strategies, aligned to purpose. They set the stage for diving into designing, planning and implementing incredible and impactful engagement experiences. Put into practice, these can help change the story around engagement.

By no means does this approach hold all the answers. But we can start by asking better questions.

Critical insights

Critical insights to keep in mind from the Tamarack community:

- There is no simple formula for citizen-led approaches, but there are **foundational principles worth pursuing.**
- Success is found by **involving citizens in codesigning the engagement processes**, not just in codesigning potential solutions.
- It is more important than you think to **frame thoughtful questions to engage citizens.**
- **Citizens are not a problem to be solved**, but they can be assets draw upon to solve complex community problems.

"Citizens at the Centre: A Journey With my Tamarack Institute Colleagues" (Hardy, 2019a)

If we want to truly build bridges toward authentic engagement, we must do better at investing in the foundations and shifting the underlying mindsets.

Building foundations

To take a proactive approach that builds rather than breaks down, we need a framework—a pathway to help us prepare. Through this, I hope we can reinforce the positive through new ways of thinking. We need to change the conversation.

I am proposing four key pillars for an engagement foundations roadmap strategy, Know your why; know yourselves; build a culture; measure progress; as shown in Figure 8. These foundations are not easy. They take deep reflection and discussion with leaders, sponsors, decision-makers and the community.

Figure 8
Four Foundational Pillars for Engagement

About the pillars

These four pillars emerged through the research outlined in this report. In some ways, they reflect common principles or values in the resources while in others, they highlight ideas that are not always articulated. They are intended to be simple and clear to enhance usability and reflect the core of what is needed to make engagement truly successful. These pillars are less connected to methods or process than to an underlying framework for engagement. They also interconnect and reinforce each other.

For each pillar, I have articulated a draft set of its qualities or attributes (see Appendix B) to strive for in authentic engagement. Future development of this foundational concept (in collaboration with practitioners) would be important to further refine and describe the specific elements and provide brief explanations. In the following section, I will list these inter-connected qualities, along with a set of draft reflection questions. These questions are designed to encourage deeper thinking around the foundation, to get to the heart of each pillar and its qualities. In the future, this section on foundational pillars could be developed into the first part of a prototype toolkit for authentic engagement.

Sprinkled throughout, there are also some selected resources, tools and tips that might be useful in exploring the foundational pillar at hand. All resources are listed in the References section of this report.

Know your why

> We want to change the starting place to understanding why, through deep reflection and exploration. (A. Gloger, personal communication, Apr. 8, 2020)

People embark on engagement for a variety of reasons; some reasons they understand, some they aren't even aware of themselves. Engagement may be requested, required or just the right thing. Taking the time to understand the purpose and intent of the engagement is critical to shaping all the other elements in the engagement initiative.

For authentic, meaningful engagement, I propose the following five key qualities to strive for:

- Articulated purpose
- Inspiring goals
- Genuine intent
- Shared benefit
- Collective aspirations

Reflection questions

- What is the project or issue we want to work on? Why is it important?
- What are the short and long-term outcomes and benefits we hope to achieve through engagement?
- Why is engagement important? Is there a long-term change or sustainability we have in mind?
- How might the project or initiative impact other projects, the community, business, individuals, the environment?
- How are participants and the community (including key leaders) contributing to the purpose and goals?
- Do you have primary and secondary goals or benefits you hope to achieve?
- Do we truly intend to listen, respond and act on input and feedback? Be honest.
- How will engagement add value to participants, the community, the project and society?

Featured Resource: "The Engagement Triangle" (Capire Consulting Group, 2015) can help practitioners understand the balance in three core purposes for authentic engagement: informing decisions, building capacity, and strengthening relationships. Note that some engagement has purpose outside these three.

➔ **TIP: Use the technique of the nine whys to dig deep into the reflection questions and your real purpose and intent** (Lipmanowicz, 2020).

Know yourselves

> No tool or technique is a replacement for our ability to have self-awareness and emotional intelligence and practice empathy with each other and be curious about someone who thinks about the world totally differently than you do.
> (S. Roy McCallum, personal communication, Apr. 8, 2020)

To lead and design effective engagement requires a deep understanding of oneself as a leader. To build stronger foundations, engagement leaders need to learn how to show up, enter the conversation and be there. Each team member should be working on strengthening this pillar personally, developing into the kind of leader described here. I am suggesting the following suite of qualities to strive for as an engagement leader. These can grow through experience and practice, and they can be supported through training.

- Emotional intelligence,
- Empathetic listening
- Genuine curiosity
- Servant leadership
- Courageous presence
- Honest vulnerability
- Facilitator mindset
- Humble self-assurance

Reflection questions

- What is my level of emotional intelligence?
- Am I willing to truly listen (first) and adjust my thinking?
- Do I have a posture of serving and supporting more than power and control?
- How interested am I in others?
- Do I come with unconscious bias?
- Am I willing to put my trust in others the way I want to be trusted?
- How will I enter a room or a conversation?
- Do I bring my whole self?
- Do I have habits of vulnerability and risk-taking?
- Am I sincere, reliable, competent and caring?
- Do I believe in myself?

Featured Tool: "The Community Engagement Toolkit" (Schmitz, 2017, T5) features a worksheet to test your assumptions and biases. It helps you look at blind spots, understand disparities and reveal your implicit bias.

Build a culture

> It is important to draw on lived experience to ensure that you are responding to the needs and aspirations of people. (D. Fusca, personal communication, Mar. 26, 2020)

A third foundational pillar of engagement is an organizational culture and outlook that understands the value and importance of authentic engagement. It requires not only the kind of leadership just discussed but also effective ways of thinking and doing on a team and project. It is rooted in perspectives that value shared power, community expertise and collaboration. Here I propose a system of integrated qualities for an effective culture that should characterize engagement processes:

- Long-term bias
- Systemic lens
- Patient urgency
- Supportive leadership
- Mutual respect
- Process first
- Internal champions
- Community expertise
- Capable practitioners
- Equity focus

Reflection questions

- How are we thinking about the bigger picture? Are we committed to a holistic process?
- Are we providing the time needed for deep engagement?
- Does leadership know themselves and share the why?
- Do our practitioners have the skills and knowledge to lead?
- Do we act as a team toward a shared goal? Are community members part of this team?
- How are we ensuring that engagement is equitable and includes the right diversity of voices? Do we value context expertise and lived experience first?
- Are we doing all we can to share and delegate decision-making with participants?
- Do we view participants as equal partners, not just recipients or advisers (or worse yet, problems)?

Featured Resource: Lisa Attygalle's paper, "Creating the Culture for Community Engagement," delves deeply into some of the things that might be holding you back in authentic engagement, including fear (Attygalle, 2019).

Featured Tool: "The Community Engagement Toolkit" (Schmitz, 2017, T10) features a worksheet that explores "patient urgency," with prompting around how to adjust for long-term success.

Measure progress

> You need to design evaluation from the beginning—think about your theory of change and what you want to come out of it, including new perspectives and behaviours. (S. Udow, personal communication, Apr. 3, 2020)

Many have noted that while we may plan for engagement, we haven't been putting a lot of effort into evaluation and measuring actual outcomes. Without understanding how well we are reaching our goals, it is hard to know if the initiative is working and to learn where to improve. Without capturing stories of impact, how can we build excellence and a community of practice, feeding a positive cycle to do it better and more often?

Here are some key qualities I am recommending that might demonstrate holistic evaluation as a foundation:

- Goal-orientated evaluation
- Qualitative bias
- Ongoing process
- Story sharing

Reflection questions

- Do we include both qualitative and quantitative measures in our have a plan for evaluation?
- Are we measuring the right things? Do we have logical metrics to evaluate with?
- How will we know we are making progress against the articulated intention, goals and purpose?
- Are we using a variety of evaluation approaches?
- Do we have a plan to share stories and learnings throughout?
- Are we committed to continual improvement?
- Do we have a plan to measure long-term outcomes further in the future?
- How are we understanding the impact for individuals? For communities? For the project?

Featured Tool: The "DIY Toolkit" by Nesta (Nesta, 2014), features a theory of change canvas and guide that can help clarify the ultimate long-term change or goal and intermediate outcomes and to craft a pathway to get there in a stepwise fashion.

Featured Resource: "A Development Evaluation Primer" outlines this evaluation approach that can help in understanding ongoing changes in complex, social change initiatives (Gamble, 2008).

➔ **TIP: Share stories of engagement success and learning within your organization, and in the sector. Demonstrate the improved results to help change the conversation.**

Are you ready for authentic engagement?

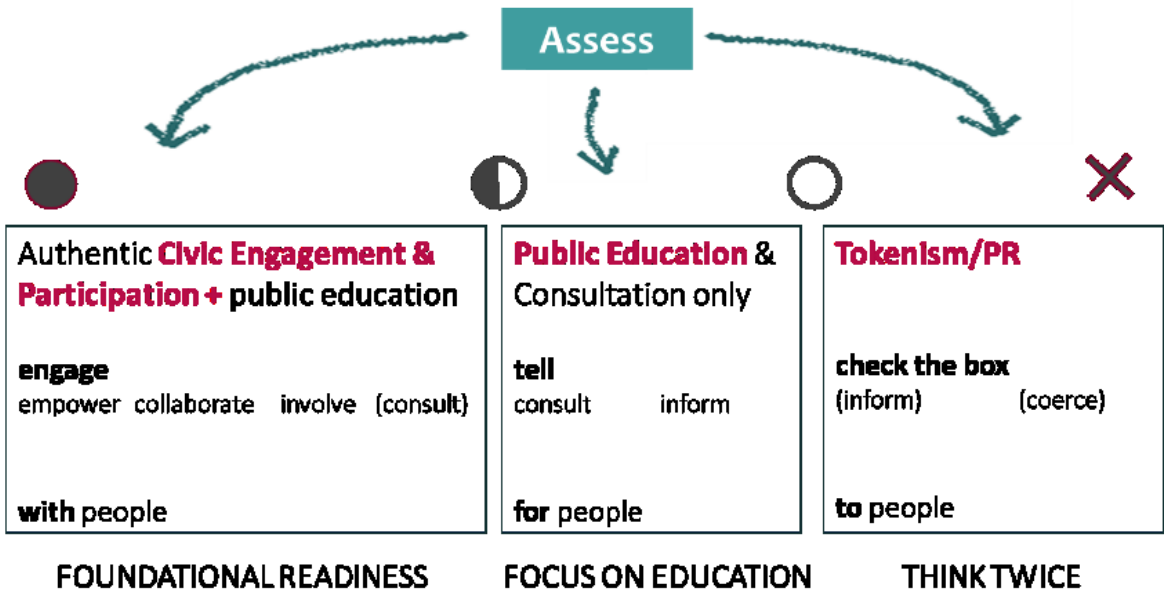
> If you see engagement as something nice to do or just want to check a "community engagement" box and get it done, your engagement will fail and likely lead to greater distrust and conflict. If you sincerely see engagement as necessary to achieving better results, then proceed. (Schmitz, 2017, p. 3)

Based on the four foundational pillars, you can assess how ready you are for engagement. I am proposing a simple self-evaluation measure, as shown in Figure 9, that measures foundational strengths on a scale ranging from strong, then developing weak and finally, detrimental. "Detrimental" was included as a level to recognize that in some cases, the state of your foundation may not be neutral; it may actually be feeding negative cycles of cynicism, tokenism and eroding trust.

Figure 9
A Rubric to Evaluate the Strength of Engagement Foundations

If you have strong foundations aligned with the heart of authentic engagement then you're ready to proceed. If not, it is better to reposition your efforts, focussing on excellent public education, information sharing, public relations and perhaps some light feedback through consultations. This aligns with the "inform" level of the IAP2 spectrum. However, if the situation calls for deeper engagement, work on building your foundational readiness. If you find you are merely "checking the box," it is time to pause and think again. Figure 10 illustrates the different pathways to follow, based on foundational strength.

Figure 10
Assessing Your Readiness and Choosing the Appropriate Engagement Pathway



Engagement Considerations

Match your approach to the situation! Be strategic about when you invest in engagement. Focus your resources on the difficult, complex issues and projects. Invest in authentic engagement when it matters and do it right.

Maximize investing in engagement when

There is already deep engagement in a community.
The issues are complex and values-based.
There is a likely harm or risk of *not* having meaningful conversations (i.e., without engagement, you won't be able to move forward).

Minimize investing deep engagement time and resources in processes where

You are just checking a box or filling obligations.
You already have a solution mostly designed, with little room for input, or predefined outcomes.
The initiative is simple and with low impact or low sensitivity (e.g., more technical infrastructure projects).

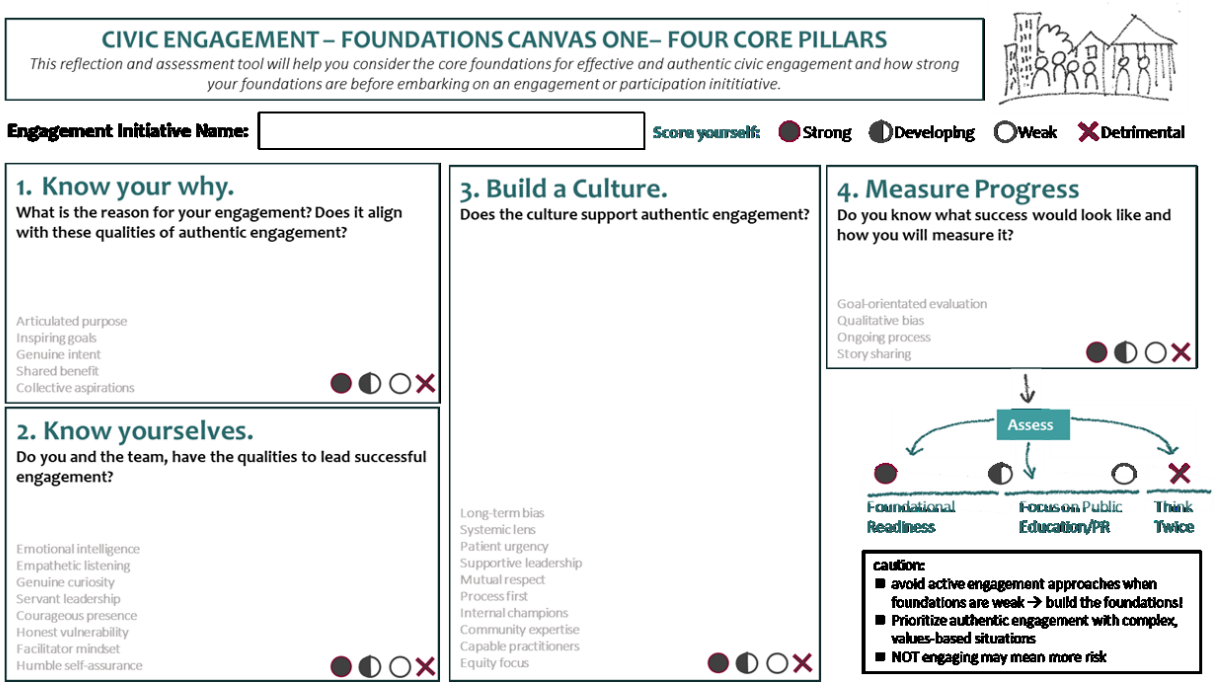
➔ **TIP: Also consider factors such as the intensity of effort, investment and resources, along with the existing level of social connection, social capital and capacity for participation.**

An engagement foundations canvas: A prototype

To put these foundational pillars and assessment into practice, I have developed a prototype for a canvas, captured in Figure 11. This one-page tool would be used by engagement practitioners and community leaders to think through the core foundational pillars and their qualities, with assessment along the way. The full-page canvas prototype can be seen in Appendix C.

Figure 11

A Prototype Model for an Engagement Foundations Canvas



Building on the foundation

If building the foundation is the first stage toward engagement, then building on top of it is the next. Working in tandem with the foundations and making them a reality, it is time to start turning toward the next level: the design and planning of the process of engagement. I have identified six secondary pillars to keep in mind at this stage. These are shown in Figure 12. Rooted in core principles, these secondary pillars reflect the emerging themes discussed earlier. They also address the barriers, from the practical to the psychological.

Similar to the foundational pillars, these secondary pillars each have a draft set of core qualities or attributes to work toward, which are found in Appendix B. Some relate closely to specific tools and methods, while others build on the foundational pillars. A deeper discussion of methods will follow on in the next section, "Methods and techniques for engagement".

The secondary pillars are interconnected with each other and with the foundational pillars. They form a network that is intended to help frame the thinking to support effective engagement, helping to chart a pathway for implementation.

Figure 12
Six Secondary Pillars for Authentic Engagement

These pillars and their related qualities are drawn from the research and are a work in progress. Future development would be beneficial in further refining them and their related qualities. Additionally, a practical tool would be a valuable next step in supporting practitioners in applying these priorities.

For now, I want to touch on each of these secondary pillars and some selected qualities, to provide a taste of how they might be implemented.

Put people first

> Elevating [the] engagement to a culture that sees people with living and lived experience as co-pilots in the planning, design, and delivery of activities that not only meet their needs but are also driven by their aspirations. (Nallamothu, 2019, para. 6)

Much of the research highlighted the need to put people, rather than institutions or sponsors, at the centre of engagement. There is a need to start where people are. This means adopting an empathetic, human-centred approach. In many ways, this pillar is the central one that binds all the others together, and could be considered as a foundational pillar in a future iteration.

Consider the concept of **local leaders.** Many of the practitioners stressed the importance of asking who the right people are to hold a conversation. A best practice was to tap into existing local champions to host the conversation—to talk to community, to conduct interviews, to facilitate groups. Alternatively, local community members were hired to act as ambassadors or champions. These approaches sent the message that the community is valued, built trust in listening and to grew capacity along the way, giving back to the community.

Informed involvement and **capacity building** are two more qualities that are identified frequently. In engagement, it starts with ensuring that participants provide critical contextual information. It also means sharing key background information with all, essential for making wise decisions and giving useful feedback. For authentic engagement, it also means investing in civic literacy to help people understand how things really work. This also means building people up as capable partners throughout. Capacity building includes practising effective dialogue and building in training where possible. And capacity building extends to the client or sponsor as well—helping them to also have the skills and knowledge to support an effective process.

Putting people first also includes considerations of diversity and inclusion. I have proposed the qualities of **radical inclusion, designed accessibility** and **demographic diversity** as guides to this area. Ensuring an appropriate "representativeness" is key, whether participation is by self-selected or possibly random (lottery) or curated in some way. Many of the existing sets of principles and handbooks address this, especially with respect to outreach and recruitment.

Featured Tool: On understanding representation, the "Community Engagement Toolkit" (Schmitz, 2017, T4) provides a helpful framework to understand who is at the table from the perspective of issue experience, demographic relevance, geographic relevance and direct engagement.

Featured Resource: The engagement report called "Strengthening Public Engagement in Edmonton" (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016, pp. 24–26) highlights examples of capacity-building approaches.

Share power

> When government policies and programs are co-produced with citizens, they are more sustainable and promote a broader understanding of related issues. When people feel a sense of ownership, they are more likely to also feel a sense of commitment and responsibility. Creating conditions for quality co-production, then, is essential infrastructure to good governance. (Gordon, 2016, 16)

Power and decision-making are resounding themes in the domain of civic engagement. To ensure that power is shared as much as possible—that participants are deeply involved in decision-making and implementation—it is important to adopt a partnership approach and take a step back from having to be in control. Participants should be valued as **equal partners** and **influencing decisions** throughout the engagement.

Featured Toolkit: The "Liberating Structures" set of tools (Lipmanowicz, 2020) offers 33 micro-structures that can equalize power in the room and help groups work together.

Featured Resource: The "Engagement Streams Framework" (National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010) describes four different streams for deep engagement, and when they might be used: Exploration, Conflict Transformation, Decision-Making, and Collaborative Action.

Adopt effective attitudes

> Start with stories. (A. Gloger, personal communication, Apr. 8, 2020)

Building on the "know yourselves" and "build a culture" foundational pillars, effective attitudes for engagement efforts include a collection of attributes that start to shape the design of engagement. I have suggested a host of interconnected qualities in Appendix B, and I'll highlight a few here.

The **stories first** quality is closely tied to the ideas of listening and valuing context expertise (lived experience). Stories are powerful. By using stories as a starting point and listening first, you set a receptive tone. Participants' stories, especially of success, inspire and enhance empathetic attitudes. The practice of storytelling helps to build positive patterns, to foster agency, belonging, and a sense of the collective. Stories encourage deeper relationships, so people can really engage; this builds social capital. Putting stories first helps to move from deficits to strengths, from confrontation to collaboration. It sets the tone to welcome a diversity of perspectives, and it can bring deep and fresh insights to a challenge or situation.

Communities do not exist in a vacuum, and ensuring that their pasts are honoured through **valued history** and **contextual grounding** is central to building trust and addressing consultation fatigue and cynicism.

Honouring past and present community efforts is a place to start. Taking the time to understand any historical factors and possible baggage is a valuable practice. A community may have been burned in the past or treating poorly. While this process can take significant time and effort, without it, a process can just become more entrenched and stalled. Additionally, honouring and supporting existing community efforts— and even tapping into what's already happening and existing groups—is a good next step. It serves to build on strengths and create a more community-based focus.

Featured Tool: The "Atlanta Community Engagement Playbook" (City of Atlanta, 2016, p. 59) highlights storytelling and some different approaches and kinds of stories that might be incorporated, including "stories of self," "stories of us" and "stories of now."

Featured Resource: Asset-based community development builds on existing local assets that can often be overlooked, including experience, skills, knowledge and relationships. The "Community Engagement Toolkit" (Schmitz, 2017, p. T3) offers core questions to adopt this approach.

Design for success

> Incorporate arts-based methods as much as you can. Make it fun and interesting—it doesn't have to be serious. (S. Udow, personal communication, Apr. 3, 2020)

Drawing from the field of design thinking, and considering factors for success, this pillar starts to move into the actual design and format of engagement. Beginning with **participatory planning** as a quality, it is important to bring participants and community into the conversation early and often. This will ensure that the there is alignment not only on the overall purpose and goals but also in the approach taken. Community members should help codesign solutions *and* help codesign the process. This will ensure that the approach and any questions to explore make sense for the community and that they'll even want to be engaged or see an issue. This can help provide context and wisdom on past experiences as well.

To overcome practical and (some) emotional barriers, the best practice is to **bring engagement to the people,** making it easier and more comfortable**.**

Featured Resource: The "Community Planning Toolkit" (Community Places, 2014, p. 9) highlights a range of arts and creativity forms of engagement, with their strengths and weaknesses.

➔ **TIP: Think creatively. Playgrounds, community centres, kitchens and existing social groups are examples of where people are already gathering.**

Communicate well

> You can avoid a lot of conflict and drama by being transparent.
> (D. Fusca, personal communication, Mar. 26, 2020)

Communication is a core pillar that must underpin all engagement efforts. People need to be invited and informed early and often, so a fulsome and **targeted recruitment and outreach approach** is essential. Engagement initiatives must have **uncompromising transparency**, including sharing the goals and circling back through **feedback loops** along the way, not only providing decisions but also rationale. Applying human-centred thinking means using **diverse methods** of communication, integrating online and off-line methods as seamlessly as possible. It means prioritizing **inspiring and clear** materials and visuals, considering translation to other languages and creative approaches such as video. Consider clarity, diversity and continuity as guiding lights.

Featured Resource: The "Community Engagement Toolkit" (sparc bc, 2013, p. 10) includes a helpful matrix of diverse communication methods, noting when to use each, based on level of impact.

➔ **TIP:** Excellence in communication, public education, outreach and public relations are all key to a successful engagement effort. Alone, information pathways constitute a public education pathway only, and not engagement.

Resource wisely

> Every government entity should have a line item called civic engagement, and they should be using techniques to go out into the community and engage the public in creative low-tech and high-tech ways, and in various languages. (Liu, 2018, "is there anything" section)

While engagement can be done on any budget, and often is (especially on the community level), understanding how to allocate the appropriate resources is important. **Sensible timelines** incorporate engagement into a project plan from the beginning and being patient with the process. It also means giving practitioners the time to prepare and giving the public ample opportunity to make arrangements to be able to participate. "You need to stop thinking of engagement as a project-related cost. It's more accurate to think of it as an investment in building an ongoing asset that should generate benefits long after your initial investment" (Business Lab, 2019, "Engagement is expensive" section).

Featured Resource: The City of Victoria has a template to help think through potential resources for engagement in their guide, "Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at The City of Victoria" (City of Victoria, 2012, p. 41).

Methods and techniques for engagement

These various principle-based pillars and their associated qualities work together to create bridges toward better engagement. They foster new patterns and cycles that reinforce new ways of thinking. They build the framework to apply engaging and effective approaches to engagement activities.

Creating a solid process and plan with specific methods is the next step. As mentioned, there are many handbooks and toolkits to draw on for planning engagement. These guidebooks overlap in many ways and include key elements such as background of engagement, principles and a list of suggested methods, sometimes with selection guidelines. A curated overview of some of these guidebooks and resources is provided as part of the References section of this report. Since the resources come from different sectors and contexts, they do vary; by drawing on more than one, you can shape engagement that suits your context while continuing to ground the plan in the foundational and secondary pillars.

These resources present a selection of tools and methods to apply. These range from traditional face-to-face methods to increasingly common digital-first methods. It is important to consider both online and off-line tools to reach different and targeted audiences. Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is pushing more innovation into the online sphere, with many engagement professionals seeking authentic virtual approaches that can better emulate in-person experiences.

In Appendix D I have compiled a master list of dozens of methods and techniques, as drawn from the toolkits and research. Applying a variety of methods to engagement is valuable and necessary to meet the various needs and priorities for each situation. The list includes a wide variety of in-person, in-depth ("thick"), online and innovative approaches. These cover various stages in the IAP2 spectrum and suit different intentions. The array of choices is staggering. How to choose?

Many resources offer methods that relate primarily to informing, recruitment, outreach and communication, rather than deeper engagement. These types of methods are useful in designing how you want to apply the "Communicate Well" secondary pillar. They are also useful for those designing parallel processes of public education and awareness, separate from real engagement. They are not included in the engagement methods list in Appendix D since they support, rather than embody, authentic engagement.

Choosing methods

Building on the selection criteria from several resources, I am proposing a multifaceted selection rubric that reflects the richness of different perspectives to support a more thoughtful planning process. Since every situation is different, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Also, *how* a method is used, as rooted in the pillars, will have a big impact on its impact and success.

Five potential criteria are outlined in Table 1, with a number of options for each one. Note that not every method or technique will fit all of these criteria, and some may fall into more than one of the choices.

Table 1

Possible Criteria for Engagement Method Selection

Intent[a]	Focus[b]	Engagement Stream[c]	Engagement Level[d]	Format[a]
inform decision-making	discover	exploration	involve	one-to-one
build capacity	analyze	conflict transformation	collaborate	small group
strengthen relationships	create	decision-making	empower (inc. codesign and coproduction)	large group
		collaborative action		drop-in/pop-up
				written
				digital

Note. Criterion are from Capire Consulting Group (2015)[a], Cities of Service (2020)[b], National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (2010)[c], IAP2 (2020)[d].

An additional option is to use the secondary pillars. Only certain pillars lend themselves to methods specifically (e.g., "Resource Wisely"), and this is something to explore in the future. Collaboratively working through these criteria with practitioners and thought leaders would help refine and validate the most essential criteria, possibly combining or augmenting existing frameworks.

Method cards

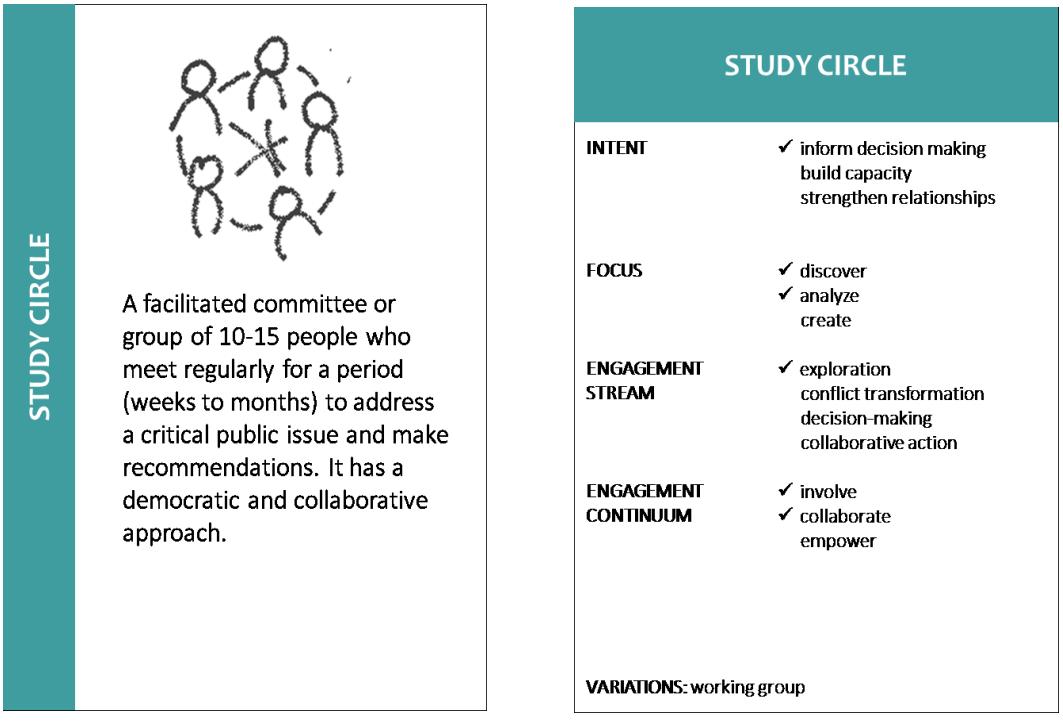
To help support engagement leaders in this planning and selection process, a set of method cards for authentic engagement could also be developed. These would incorporate the final selection criteria. They would also include a brief description of the method, a relevant image, and related methods. Some kind of pattern language could be developed to support their use. An accompanying guidebook with links to additional resources would be important to provide more detailed information for each method. As another key part of an authentic engagement toolkit, these method cards could be applied in a variety of design processes, including in the community. They could help simplify the process and encourage the use of more meaningful and effective methods.

Method card prototype

Figure 13 provides an example of what a method card might look like. There might be different sets of cards aligned with each of the core criteria, with easy to navigate colours (and possibly symbols). For this example, I have used the format criterion to differentiate between card sets, this one representing a card in the "small group" card set.

Figure 13

Sample Prototype Method Card



Note. The first side (left) provides a method name with short description and image. The second side on the right show the selection criterion, as well as related methods or variations.

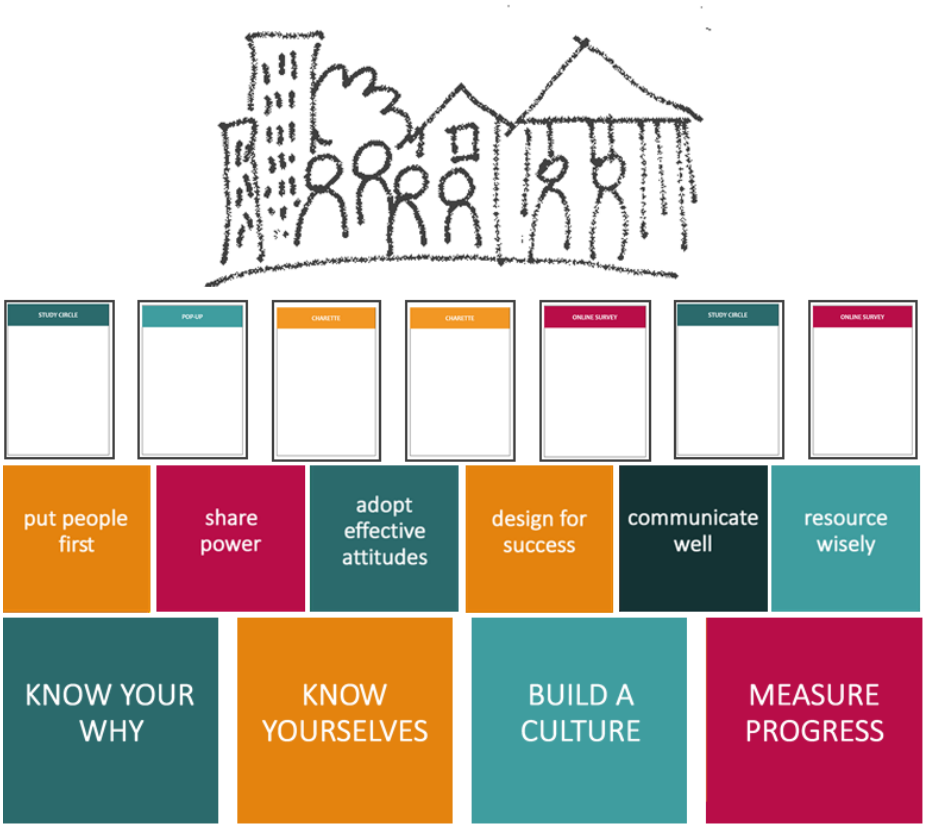
Toward a toolkit

Authentic engagement can be better achieved by focussing on the foundational pillars, the secondary pillars and the core engagement methods we have discussed. These work together to build bridges to successful engagement initiatives, as visualized in Figure 14.

Beginning with foundations, these components might be transformed into a more actionable toolkit, which might include some of the following components:

- **Engagement foundations canvas** with reflection questions
- Secondary pillars with core qualities and **key resources and tools** to apply
- **Methods cards set**, with accompanying methods descriptions and complete list

Figure 14
Building a Strong Foundation for Authentic Engagement



Note. Four foundational pillars support six more secondary pillars, setting the stage for applying methods in engagement.

Conclusion

Civic participation. Public involvement. Community engagement. Whatever you call it, engagement, when done right, offers great promise. Whether rooted in community or initiated by institutions, it can help address today's challenges, build the best solutions possible and make a better world. It certainly doesn't hold all the answers, but it is part of the puzzle.

Leaders and residents from all perspectives are recognizing the value of engagement. As we have seen, there is a growing understanding of its importance in creating the kind of future our communities and cities want and need. And yet, making it a reality is easier said than done.

This paper has journeyed through the context of engagement and its myriad, ever-changing facets. It has brought to light both barriers and benefits, and it is grounded in the deep experience and thinking of many practitioners, leaders and organizations.

A fresh way of thinking about engagement has emerged through this journey—one that is centred on foundations—strong foundational pillars with secondary pillars to build on those. I proposed the beginnings of a toolkit that would put these foundations into practice and support engagement design, including method selection.

My hope is that this new approach will inspire and support everyone involved in engagement efforts, and that these kinds of practical tools might enable and empower more authentic and impactful engagement.

Ultimately, I hope that investing in tools like these might help us all build bridges to participation that work best for everyone—where, working together, residents and leaders can achieve better futures and strengthen our communities in the process. Everyone has a voice and a role to play.

Let's a build a **strong foundation.**
Then, let's build on that.

Recommendations

As I explored a range of elements around engagement and participation, I uncovered more and more things to consider. I chose to focus on the central themes and core pillars for engagement, while there were many other paths to follow. The lack of participatory methods through the research restricted the ability to generate, explore or test concepts collaboratively. In order to further answer the question of how to build bridges, to pursue some additional pathways for enriching the thinking, and to develop the proposed pillars and tools, I recommend the following:

Toolkit development

- Conduct participatory research with practitioners to refine the pillars and related qualities.
- Develop descriptions for each quality, identifying related resources and tools for each pillar.
- Further develop the Engagement Foundations Canvas. Build on the prototype and conduct participatory testing with engagement leaders.
- Use participatory methods to explore the development of method cards and accompanying criteria, and conduct prototype testing.
- Explore a second part of the canvas to incorporate the secondary pillars.
- Create a guidebook to support the use of the canvas and method cards

Related research pathways

- Research online engagement approaches, which are accelerating during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Pay attention to the rapidly changing environment in general and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Identify implications for engagement, opportunities to build on and risks to avoid.
- Go deeper into behavioural insights to better understand how to effectively foster deeper change.

Mapping

- Develop a systems map of engagement and the diverse factors at play, including what reinforces both positive and negative actions (based in the research).
- Create a value map to illustrate the actual, or potential, value exchanges between stakeholders in engagement, to further understand motivations and intervention points.

References

Experts interviewed

Jason Diceman, City of Toronto

Coordinator in the Public Consultation Unit for 10 years, previously at LURA Consulting (public realm).
Focus on transportation planning, cycling and trusted resource for sticky, controversial consultations.
Creator of "feedback frames" for more anonymous voting on options

Daniel Fusca, City of Toronto

Manager in Public Consultation for Parks, Forestry and Recreation since 2019, previously in the planning department for five years leading stakeholder engagement.
Focus on larger capital projects such as community centres.
Building an internal engagement community of practice.

Anne Gloger, Centre for Connected Communities & Scarborough Storefront

Founder of the Centre for Connected Communities (2 years) and Principal at East Scarborough Storefront (20 years).
Focus on collaborative community solutions to complex issues in the inner suburbs.
Pioneering the unique connected community approach to community development.

Stephani Roy Roy McCallum, Courageous Leadership Project

"Chief Storm Rider" at Courageous Leadership Project for the past four years, founder of Dialogue Partners (13 years) and former trainer and course developer with IAP2.
Focus on working with leaders and communities one having to have brave, honest conversations that matter, through conflict, dialogue and deliberation.

Sara Udow, Process

Principal at PROCESS, a studio specializing in community engagement, public art and land use planning, previously a planner for six years with additional grassroots work. Also partner for Crazy Dames.
Focus on urban and cultural planning, facilitation and bringing arts-based approaches to engagement.

Toolkits and resources

There are a host of toolkits and resources available, with new ones being developed all the time. Some focus on community level engagement while others take more of a government perspective. Some are comprehensive, including elements such as background, principles and techniques and methods, along with selection criteria. Others focus on narrower elements of these. Each offers different value for the practitioner. Each has their strengths and weaknesses but many lack a robust tool to build the foundations, to set the groundwork towards building for authentic engagement. Hyperlinks are provided in the titles.

Atlanta Community Engagement Playbook

A community and city-co-created guidebook on civic engagement for the City of Atlanta. Its unique approach looks at both community associations and service providers. For community associations, it suggests act constructively, build collectively and work creatively as principles, and then lists "plays" -- get organized, share your story, step up, broken down further into subpoints. For service providers, the principles are built holistically, act sustainably and work transparently, with "plays" as lay the groundwork, listen and learn, step back. It has some handy checklists and action guides for implementing some of the ideas (City of Atlanta, 2016).

Citizen Engagement Handbook for B.C. Government Employees

A handbook for government of British Columbia employees to provide direction to staff who are planning a citizen engagement project. It includes background on engagement and why it is important and tools for planning, implementation and post-engagement reporting and includes a series of checklists for staff (Massoud, 2013).

Community Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit from is self-described as: "… an adaptable approach to designing a community engagement process tailored to specific issues and/or developments in your community. The five (5) steps of effective community engagement planning are outlined in this document along with forty-seven (47) community engagement methods. A diverse range of examples are provided throughout this toolkit in an effort to demonstrate community engagement methods in action. This toolkit was designed for municipal social planners and other municipal planning staff that are thinking about how to design and implement a community engagement process that is inclusive, accessible and results-oriented." It includes a helpful matrix aligning various methods with when to use what, from communication to consultation to decision-making (sparc bc, 2013).

Community Engagement Toolkit

This toolkit walks through a step-by-step process with key areas and questions connected to key element for better engagement: Be Result-driven & Purposeful; Community Engagement Spectrum; Asset-based community development; Equity – Who is at our Tables?; Equity – Testing Assumptions & Bias; Assessing & Approaching Audiences; Orienting & Supporting Successful Engagement; Building Partnerships, Starting Local; Patient Urgency & Momentum; Capacity Building;
And Change Management (Schmitz, 2017).

Community Planning – Community Engagement Toolkit

This handbook includes 10 standards for engagement and several tools for selecting engagement methods. Dialogue Designer considers 1. Objectives 2. Target Audience 3. Sensitivity. Process Planner considers six stages: 1. Scope 2. Purpose 3. Participants 4. Context 5. Follow Up 6. Results. It lists a broad range of tools and techniques and the strengths and weaknesses of each. It wraps with a matrix that outlines when each method is appropriate/useful at different stages in the planning process (Community Places, 2014).

Foundations for Success – A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria

This robust strategy for a municipality that includes a review of civic engagement and its challenges, along with a series of recommended actions (Role Clarity/Prioritization/Coordination & Consistency/Resourcing/Customer Service & Communications/Diversity). It is rooted in a modified IAP2 spectrum: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. The resources section outlines 12 steps to successful engagement, with accompanying worksheets, along with a techniques toolkit describing a series of techniques and methods, recommending when to use what, considerations and cost. IT pays particular attention to NCDD engagement streams, and references a series of other resources (City of Victoria, 2012).

NCDD Engagement Streams Framework

This handbook from the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation lists four streams of engagement, and classifies a series of processes (methods) across those streams: Exploration, Conflict Transformation, Decision-Making, Collaborative Action. For each method, it lists size of group, type of session and participant selection, as well as short descriptions of each process (National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010).

Strengthening Public Engagement in Edmonton

This report out of the Centre for Public Involvement in Edmonton outlines the recent thinking around engagement. It explores benefits and outlines three core infrastructure elements needed: the practice, the culture, and the structure of Engagement. It outlines "thick", "thin" and conventional types of engagement and highlights select methods. It highlights principles for planning as well as a number of digital tools (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016).

Tamarack Institute, various

Tamarack has a host of resources to support community engagement, including an engagement planning canvas (Tamarack Institute, 2020a), an index of techniques (Wanless, 2020) and many white papers and thought pieces. Visit the website to learn more.

The Engagement Triangle – Understanding the Purpose of Your Engagement

This booklet provides a helpful spatial tool to map your primary and secondary desired outcomes for engagement on three vertices: informing decision, strengthening relationships and building relationships. The booklet also suggests methods for each of 10 potential combinations of these vertices. Note that not all methods or engagement will fit into these outcome options.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Behaviour, belonging and social capital

About Behaviour

Being human-centred means more than understanding people's needs and wants (and many other things), at least on the surface. It also means understanding how behaviour works and how it is rooted in the deeper pains and potential gains a person might have. Understanding behaviour can help us to better understand how to motivate people to care and to take action. This applies to leaders and participants alike. The fields of behaviour change and engagement are closely intertwined. "To fully engage, we need action... To change behaviours, we need to engage" (Bowmaker, 2019, p. 1).

One study on engagement and behaviours looked at both external and internal drivers (Foley and Griffiths, 2011). Time, not money, constituted the main "cost" externally. On the internal side, social networks (both institutional and informal) were often the primary triggers of engagement. Getting bystanders to engage is most influenced by friends and family, and social institutions (e.g., religious organizations, schools) (Thomas, 2018).

McClusky highlights the following three premises about behaviour to keep in mind:
1. That we often mistakenly believe that both our decisions as well as others' are rational (i.e., well considered and consistent with our beliefs)
2. That in fact our behaviours and others' are highly influenced by our environments
3. That understanding how our environments influence our behaviours in consistent and predictable ways will enable us to design environments that lead to desirable behaviours.

We would be wise to look beyond the engagement sphere to the behavioural sciences to catalyze change.

What is belonging?

"We define belonging simply as being part of a collective we. It's a two-way street: It's about communities sending signals of acceptance and inclusion, and about individuals cultivating their own connections to community. A sense of belonging is important to build safe, vibrant communities, and it brings purpose to our lives" (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017, p. 2).

Community Foundations Canada has identified several key factors that influence belonging in a community:

- Safety and security
- Families
- Where we live
- Public space
- Economic inclusion
- Migration and Citizenship

In order to build belonging and community, we need to understand and invest in these areas, both within and beyond the scope of engagement. Belonging means creating a place at the table—for everyone.

Social capital

The core idea of social capital is that **social networks have value**. Social capital refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' (who people know) and the inclinations that come out of these networks to do things for each other ("norms of reciprocity") (Bowling Alone, 2020). Robert Putnam, author of *Bowling Alone*, also highlights a few key factors with social capital, including the following:

- Collective action depends upon social networks (e.g., the role that the black church played in the Civil Rights movement) although collective action also can foster new networks.
- Broader identities and solidarity are encouraged by social networks that help translate an "I" mentality into a "we" mentality.

Appendix B: Pillars for authentic engagement and their qualities

A list of the foundational and secondary pillars, that are essential for active and authentic engagement, gleaned from the research and rooted in principles. They embody the theory of effective engagement and apply across engagement initiatives, beyond just techniques and methods. Pillars work together and relate to each to build a strong whole. Each pillar has a set of inter-connected qualities or attributes connected with it that reflect the heart of each pillar.

Caveat: The are a very rough working draft that would need collaborative efforts to refine and descriptions to explain.

Foundational pillars for engagement

KNOW YOUR WHY

- Articulated purpose
- Inspiring goals
- Genuine intent
- Shared benefit
- Collective aspirations

KNOW YOURSELVES

- Emotional intelligence
- Empathetic listening
- Genuine curiosity
- Servant leadership
- Courageous presence
- Honest vulnerability
- Facilitator mindset
- Humble self-assurance

BUILD A CULTURE

- Long-term bias
- Systemic lens
- Patient urgency
- Supportive leadership
- Mutual respect
- Process first
- Internal champions
- Community expertise
- Capable practitioners
- Equity focus

MEASURE PROGRESS

- Goal-orientated evaluation
- Qualitative bias
- Ongoing process
- Story sharing

Secondary pillars for engagement

PUT PEOPLE FIRST

- Prioritized relationships
- Lived-experience focus
- Strengths-based
- Human-centred
- Radical inclusion
- Designed accessibility
- Demographic diversity
- Thoughtful dialogue
- Building capacity
- Growing civic changemakers
- Informed involvement
- Local leaders
- Strong partnerships
- Real reciprocity

SHARE POWER

- Balanced power
- Shared alignment
- Influencing decisions
- Deep deliberation
- Equal partners

ADOPT EFFECTIVE ATTITUDES

- Empowering methods
- Collaborative mindset
- Bold Creativity
- Local flavour
- Participatory preference
- Contextual grounding
- Warmly welcoming
- Adaptable process
- Hard conversations
- Valued history

DESIGN FOR SUCCESS

- Participatory planning
- Appropriate process
- Multiple moments
- Engaging visuals
- Delicious food
- Time considerate
- Smaller groups
- Enjoyable experiences
- Arts infused
- Brought to them
- Paired with action

COMMUNICATE WELL

- Uncompromising transparency
- Ongoing communication
- Targeted approaches
- Radical sharing
- Usable information
- Be honest
- Inspiring, clear materials

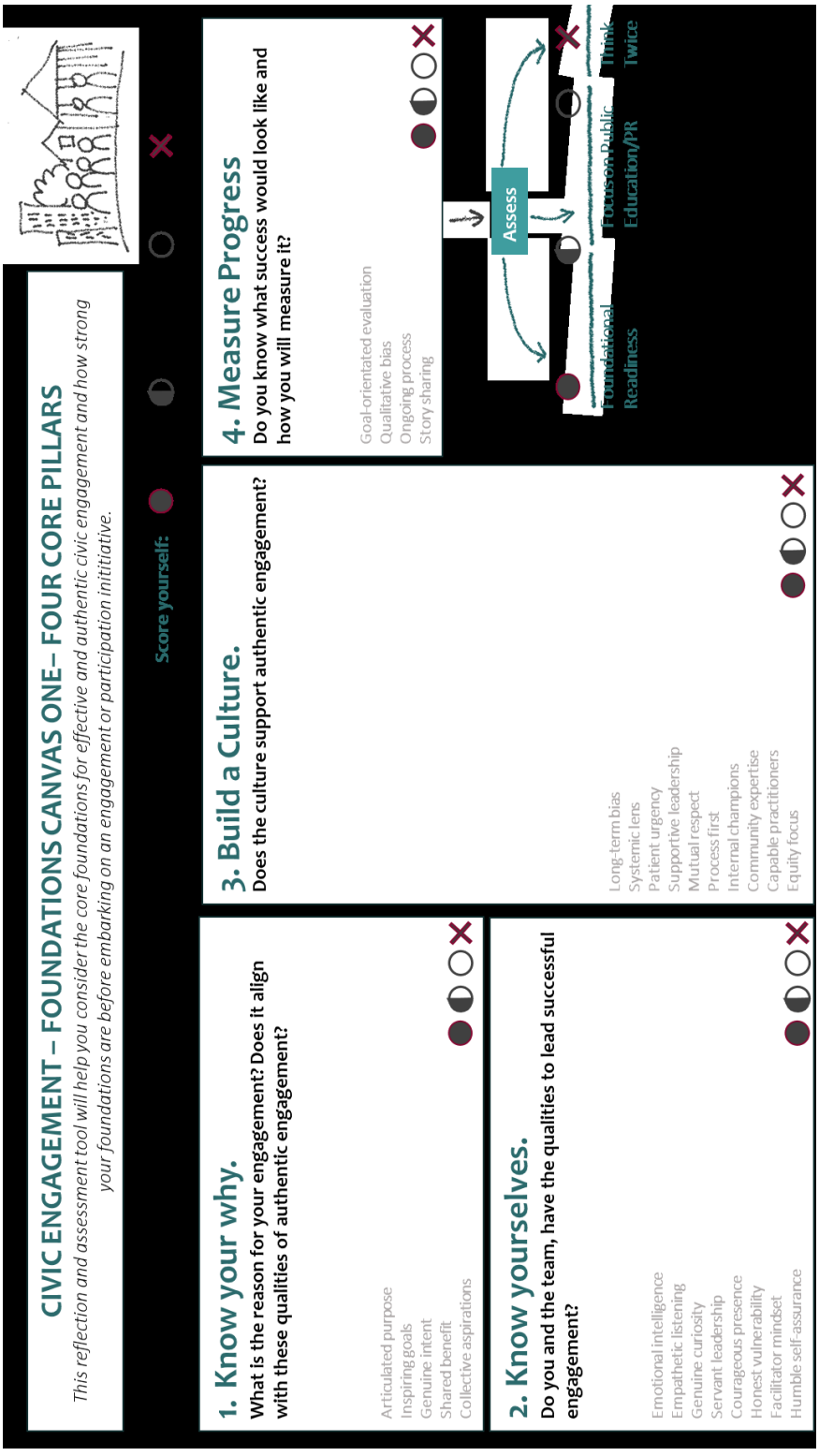
RESOURCE WISELY

- Targeted investment
- Sensible timelines
- Realistic budgets

Appendix C: Engagement foundations canvas—Prototype

Figure 15C

A Prototype Model for an Engagement Foundations Canvas (enlarged)



Appendix D: Methods for engagement

This is a list of engagement methods and techniques drawn from a wide variety of sources (listed below). These methods cover a wide range of approaches and there is some overlap. The methods range in scale and can work in tandem or within each other. Many of the methods might be converted to online formats, as is currently being accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This list does not include methods focused primarily on outreach, public education and information sharing.

Some sources provided categories or levels with which to classify the methods, as a sort of selection criteria. The source list indicates where each potential set of criteria came from and designation across the IAP2 was woven throughout the literature. Where indicated in the sources, a method's classification in these draft criteria is indicated and more work is needed to refine and complete these designations. While classification and criteria can be helpful tools in designing and planning engagement, facilitation, context and other factors will also influence whether a particular method will achieve its intended purpose or goal. Sources that mention or describe a method are indicated in the lettered columns and can be referenced as follows:

A Re-imagining the IAP2 Spectrum (Roy McCallum, 2017)
B Typologies of Participation (Smilt_gse827, 2010)
C Powerful Approaches to Place-making and Urban Design (Porter, 2018)
D What is Community Engagement (Hussey, 2020)
E What is the Difference Between Citizen Engagement and Participation? (Lodewijckx, 2019)
F Citizen, Customer, Partner: Rethinking the Place of the Public in Public Management (J. C. Thomas, 2013)
G Public Engagement Guide (Town of Oakville, ??)
H Index of Community Engagement Techniques (Wanless, 2020)
I Citizen Engagement Techniques* (source of **focus** criteria) (Cities of Service, 2020)
J Global Answers for Local Problems (Russon Gilman & Souris, 2020)
K NCDD's Engagement Streams Framework* (source of **engagement streams** criteria) (National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation, 2010)
L Strengthening Public Engagement in Edmonton (Centre for Public Involvement, University of Alberta, 2016)
M The Engagement Triangle – Understanding the Purpose of Your Engagement* (source of **intent** criteria and criteria) (Capire Consulting Group, 2015)
N Community Planning Toolkit (Community Places, 2014)
O Handbook on Citizen Engagement (Sheedy, 2008)
P Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria (City of Victoria, 2012)
Q Community Engagement Toolkit (sparc bc, 2013)

While not included in this list, since it is not focussed on civic engagement, the European Union has an interesting searchable online tool called the "Action Catalogue", more focused on policy and research, but highlighting many of the same methods with a collection of selection criteria (European Union, 2020).

Table 2D

Engagement Methods

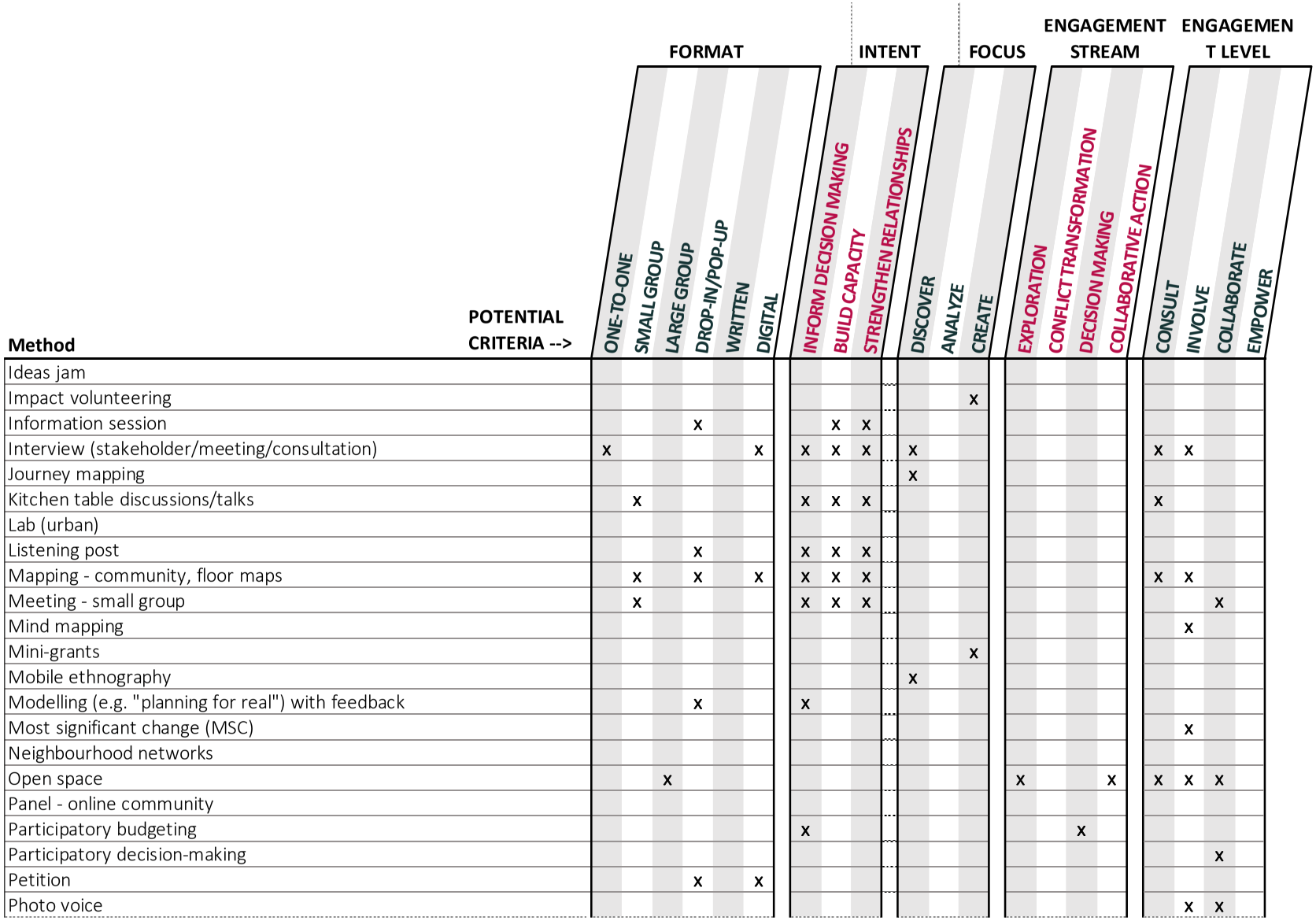
Method	FORMAT: ONE-TO-ONE	FORMAT: SMALL GROUP	FORMAT: LARGE GROUP	FORMAT: DROP-IN/POP-UP	FORMAT: WRITTEN	FORMAT: DIGITAL	INTENT: INFORM DECISION MAKING	INTENT: BUILD CAPACITY	INTENT: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS	FOCUS: DISCOVER	FOCUS: ANALYZE	FOCUS: CREATE	ENGAGEMENT STREAM: EXPLORATION	ENGAGEMENT STREAM: CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	ENGAGEMENT STREAM: DECISION MAKING	ENGAGEMENT STREAM: COLLABORATIVE ACTION	ENGAGEMENT LEVEL: CONSULT	ENGAGEMENT LEVEL: INVOLVE	ENGAGEMENT LEVEL: COLLABORATE	ENGAGEMENT LEVEL: EMPOWER
POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->																				
Active discourse, research & best practices:																				
Appreciative enquiry (summit)													x		x	x			x	
Arts/creativity-based methods (poems, songs, artwork, photography)																	x			
Asset-based community development (ABCD)																			x	x
Ballot				x	x	x	x												x	x
Bohm dialogue													x		x		x	x		
Briefing	x						x	x												
Card sorting										x										
Card storming											x									
Change by us																		x	x	
Charrette (design)		x	x											x	x			x	x	
Citizen assembly																				
Citizen choicework														x						
Citizen data - from community (e.g. issue tracking, hotline (311))	x					x												x		
Citizen field research																				
Citizen jury		x					x	x	x						x				x	x
Citizen panel			x			x												x	x	
Comment/suggestion box																	x			
Committee - citizen (advisory/community/independent; "forum")		x					x								x		x	x	x	
Community indicator project																				x
Compassionate listening													x	x						
Consensus conference/roundtable		x	x				x								x					x

Note. For each section of the table, the first page lists the methods with the selected criterion indicated with an "x". The second page indicates the source(s) where the method was found, indicated by column heading letters, which are identified on the first page of Appendix D. The table covers 10

Method	METHOD SOURCE -->	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Active discourse, research & best practices:				x														
Appreciative enquiry (summit)		x										x	x					
Arts/creativity-based methods (poems, songs, artwork, photography)															x			
Asset-based community development (ABCD)									x									
Ballot									x					x				
Bohm dialogue												x						
Briefing														x				
Card sorting										x								
Card storming										x								
Change by us		x																
Charrette (design)		x		x				x	x			x	x					x
Citizen assembly					x								x					
Citizen choicework												x						
Citizen data - from community (e.g. issue tracking, hotline (311))											x		x					x
Citizen field research											x							
Citizen jury		x		x	x			x	x			x	x	x	x	x		x
Citizen panel								x	x				x		x	x		
Comment/suggestion box		x							x									x
Committee - citizen (advisory/community/independent; "forum")		x					x	x	x						x		x	
Community indicator project									x									
Compassionate listening												x						
Consensus conference/roundtable												x			x	x		

Method	POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->	ONE-TO-ONE	SMALL GROUP	LARGE GROUP	DROP-IN/POP-UP	WRITTEN	DIGITAL	INFORM DECISION MAKING	BUILD CAPACITY	STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS	DISCOVER	ANALYZE	CREATE	EXPLORATION	CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	DECISION MAKING	COLLABORATIVE ACTION	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Consultative group			x					x	x	x											
Conversation café														x	x						
Conversation circle																			x		
Crowdfunding							x														
Crowdsourcing/ideation/idea forum				x	x		x											x	x		
Day in the Life																					
Decision-making platform							x														x
Delegated decision-making																					x
Deliberative forum																				x	x
Dialogue (app)							x											x			
Dialogue - citizens'/ intergroup			x											x	x		x				
Document co-creation																				x	
Doorknockers/door-to-door																		x			
Expectation mapping											x										
Feedback voting (e.g. dot stickers, feedback frames)					x													x			
Field trip				x					x	x											
Focus group			x					x	x	x								x			
Formal submission (call for)						x		x										x			
Forum - community				x				x	x	x									x		
Forum - online (e.g. Engagement HQ)							x	x										x	x		
Future search			x	x											x	x	x			x	x
Games & play (e.g. "serious games")																					
Hackathon																			x		

Method	METHOD SOURCE -->	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Consultative group														x				
Conversation café												x						
Conversation circle		x																
Crowdfunding													x					
Crowdsourcing/ideation/idea forum						x		x	x				x					
Day in the Life			x															
Decision-making platform									x									
Delegated decision-making																		
Deliberative forum		x																
Dialogue (app)													x					x
Dialogue - citizens'/ intergroup												x				x		
Document co-creation									x									
Doorknockers/door-to-door		x							x									
Expectation mapping										x								
Feedback voting (e.g. dot stickers, feedback frames)								x										
Field trip														x				
Focus group		x						x	x					x	x		x	x
Formal submission (call for)		x												x				x
Forum - community		x												x				
Forum - online (e.g. Engagement HQ)		x			x				x				x		x		x	x
Future search												x			x			x
Games & play (e.g. "serious games")											x		x					
Hackathon									x									
										x								



Method	POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->	FORMAT						INTENT			FOCUS			ENGAGEMENT STREAM				ENGAGEMENT LEVEL			
		ONE-TO-ONE	SMALL GROUP	LARGE GROUP	DROP-IN/POP-UP	WRITTEN	DIGITAL	INFORM DECISION MAKING	BUILD CAPACITY	STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS	DISCOVER	ANALYZE	CREATE	EXPLORATION	CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	DECISION MAKING	COLLABORATIVE ACTION	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Ideas jam																					
Impact volunteering													x								
Information session					x				x	x											
Interview (stakeholder/meeting/consultation)		x					x	x	x	x	x							x	x		
Journey mapping											x										
Kitchen table discussions/talks			x					x	x	x								x			
Lab (urban)																					
Listening post					x			x	x	x											
Mapping - community, floor maps			x		x		x	x	x	x								x	x		
Meeting - small group			x					x	x	x										x	
Mind mapping																			x		
Mini-grants													x								
Mobile ethnography											x										
Modelling (e.g. "planning for real") with feedback					x			x													
Most significant change (MSC)																			x		
Neighbourhood networks																					
Open space				x										x			x	x	x	x	
Panel - online community																					
Participatory budgeting								x								x					
Participatory decision-making																				x	
Petition					x		x														
Photo voice																			x	x	

Method	METHOD SOURCE -->	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Ideas jam				x														
Impact volunteering										x								
Information session														x				
Interview (stakeholder/meeting/consultation)		x		x				x	x					x			x	x
Journey mapping										x								
Kitchen table discussions/talks								x	x					x			x	
Lab (urban)											x							
Listening post														x				
Mapping - community, floor maps			x						x				x	x	x			
Meeting - small group									x					x				
Mind mapping									s									
Mini-grants										x								
Mobile ethnography										x								
Modelling (e.g. "planning for real") with feedback															x			
Most significant change (MSC)									x									
Neighbourhood networks						x												
Open space									x			x	x		x		x	x
Panel - online community					x													
Participatory budgeting					x	x			x				x					x
Participatory decision-making																		
Petition													x					
Photo voice		x																

Method	POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->	FORMAT						INTENT			FOCUS			ENGAGEMENT STREAM				ENGAGEMENT LEVEL			
		ONE-TO-ONE	SMALL GROUP	LARGE GROUP	DROP-IN/POP-UP	WRITTEN	DIGITAL	INFORM DECISION MAKING	BUILD CAPACITY	STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS	DISCOVER	ANALYZE	CREATE	EXPLORATION	CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	DECISION MAKING	COLLABORATIVE ACTION	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Photos of Favourite Places and "Love Letters																			x	x	
Pilot													x								
Polling					x		x											x			
Polling - deliberative			x	x				x								x			x	x	
Pop-ups/street stalls - interactive (e.g. wishlist)					x			x	x	x											
Prototype													x								
Public art																			x		
Public conversation/project dialogue														x							
Public hearing			x	x														x	x	x	
Referendum																				x	x
Scenario testing																			x		
Scenario workshop			x																		
Search conference																				x	x
Seminar																		x			
Session - design considerations												x									
Socrates café														x							
Solution narrative (small group)											x										
SpeakOut					x			x	x	x								x			
Storytelling - digital/analog																		x	x		
Strategic Reference Groups																				x	
Study circle/working group			x				x	x	x					x		x	x			x	
Summit - community																				x	

Method	POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Photos of Favourite Places and "Love Letters			x															
Pilot										x								
Polling													x					x
Polling - deliberative		x										x				x		x
Pop-ups/street stalls - interactive (e.g. wishlist)				x										x	x			
Prototype										x								
Public art		x																
Public conversation/project dialogue												x						
Public hearing		x						x										
Referendum		x																
Scenario testing									x									
Scenario workshop																x		
Search conference		x																
Seminar			x															
Session - design considerations										x								
Socrates café												x						
Solution narrative (small group)										x								
SpeakOut														x				x
Storytelling - digital/analog					x				x									
Strategic Reference Groups		x																
Study circle/working group									x			x	x					x
Summit - community		x																

Method	POTENTIAL CRITERIA -->	FORMAT						INTENT			FOCUS			ENGAGEMENT STREAM				ENGAGEMENT LEVEL			
		ONE-TO-ONE	SMALL GROUP	LARGE GROUP	DROP-IN/POP-UP	WRITTEN	DIGITAL	INFORM DECISION MAKING	BUILD CAPACITY	STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS	DISCOVER	ANALYZE	CREATE	EXPLORATION	CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION	DECISION MAKING	COLLABORATIVE ACTION	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
Sustained dialogue							x	x							x	x	x				
Survey - Intercept (streeters)																					
Survey (online/telephone/print)		x				x	x	x			x							x			
Symposium				x														x			
Tactical urbanism/urban interventions (urban DNA; "acupuncture")																					
Talk truck kits																			x		
Task force			x																x	x	
Tour/field trip (walking, guided/self-guided; photo/vidoe surveys)			x					x	x	x				x				x	x	x	
Town hall - virtual (Inc. phone/social media discussion)				x			x									x					
Training in participatory process and facilitation skills									x												x
Victim offender mediation															x						
Vignette sketching																					
Visioning																			x	x	
Vox pops/pox		x						x		x								x			
Wisdom circle														x							
Wisdom council								x						x		x	x				
Wishlist/Graffiti Wall																					
Working party																				x	
Workshop (design & co-design)			x	x				x	x	x								x	x	x	
World Café/Roundtable			x											x				x	x	x	

Method	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Sustained dialogue											x	x					
Survey - Intercept (streeters)			x							x				x			
Survey (online/telephone/print)	x	x			x	x	x	x									x
Symposium							x										
Tactical urbanism/urban interventions (urban DNA; "acupuncture")										x							
Talk truck kits	x																
Task force							x									x	
Tour/field trip (walking, guided/self-guided; photo/vidoe surveys)			x				x						x	x			x
Town hall - virtual (Inc. phone/social media discussion)								x			x						
Training in participatory process and facilitation skills																	
Victim offender mediation											x						
Vignette sketching			x														
Visioning	x							x									
Vox pops/pox													x	x			
Wisdom circle											x						
Wisdom council											x						
Wishlist/Graffiti Wall			x														
Working party	x																
Workshop (design & co-design)	x		x				x	x					x	x		x	x
World Café/Roundtable			x				x				x	x				x	

Appendix E: Expert interview invitation

Date: enter

Dear [expert/practitioner in civic engagement]

I am writing to you invite you to participate in an expert interview for a Major Research Project I am completing, called ***Improving Local Civic Participation: From Barriers to Bridges***. This project is part of my Masters in Design Studies at OCAD University and my Primary Advisor is Professor Jeremy Bowes (*email).*

In this project, I am exploring how civic participation and civic engagement efforts at the local level might be improved. Thought leaders are highlighting that strengthening civic culture is critical to the success of any efforts towards positive change issues of today and tomorrow.

As someone leading civic engagement efforts, I would value your contributions to this research project. By talking to practitioners and experts like you, I will deepen understanding around approaches, intentions and outcomes of various civic engagement and participation efforts. This will help to uncover fresh insights and develop recommendations to help practitioners and change makers in their engagement efforts. By participating in this study, experts may learn more about effective civic participation approaches to further their own practice. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

If you are open to participating in a semi-structured interview, please respond with possible dates, times and location that are convenient to you. The interview is expected to take 45- 60 minutes. You may choose to have your responses to be confidential if desired. Any attributable quotes in the final report will be verified for consent to publish before publication of the final report. I will share the final findings of the project with you when it is complete.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns. You can also contact the Principal Investigator, Professor Jeremy Bowes at *email.* This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (approval # 2020-40). If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the Research Ethics Office through research@ocadu.ca.

Thank you very much,

Christine

Student Investigator:
Christine Martin, Graduate Student
Strategic Foresight and Innovation, MDes
OCAD University

Faculty Supervisor
Professor Jeremy Bowes
Faculty of Design
OCAD University

Appendix F: Expert interview guide

[opening part explaining a little about the project and how I am using the term "civic engagement']

1. Opening questions about the person's experience, tenure, role…

2. How would you define civic participation or civic engagement? What would you say are the objectives?

3. Why do you think that Civic Engagement is important to your work?

4. What approaches do you use in civic engagement? What do you find the most effective? Why?

5. What have you seen as the benefits of effective civic engagement work - for your organization, for the community and/or for community members?

6. What do you see as the challenges or barriers for civic engagement? Why do you think they are there? How can they be overcome?

7. How does the physical place or neighbourhood impact civic engagement? Why do you think that is?

8. How do you think engagement approaches can best tap into people's motivations and needs? How can they build trust with participants?

9. How does civic engagement impact the health of a community and its members?

10. What creative approaches have you seen to civic engagement? How do you think it could be easier, more enjoyable? More valuable?

11. If you could change something about how civic engagement happens, what would it be?