

CITY OF OAKLAND

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION



SUBJECT/AGENCY	<i>Inclusive Community Engagement</i>	NUMBER	6802
REFERENCE	<i>Race and Equity in the City of Oakland, AI 580 Social Media Policy, AI 599 Media Relations Policy, AI 351 ADA Effective Communications Policy Disability Access Policy, AI 123 Equal Access to City Services, AI 145</i>	EFFECTIVE	<i>January 18, 2023</i>
SUPERSEDE	<i>None</i>		

PURPOSE

Achieving equity requires that all Oakland residents have the opportunity to shape the policies and programs that impact their everyday lives. As a local government, it is our duty to create and support space for dialogue, consultation, and information sharing that are inclusive of everyone who lives in our City.

The purpose of this Administrative Instruction is to ensure that City plans and policy decisions are informed and shaped in collaboration with members of communities most impacted by racial disparities. To proactively identify and remove barriers to inclusive community engagement, this AI describes the roles of City staff and provides City staff with procedures, guidelines, and best practices to consider when selecting engagement strategies and accompanying tools.

BACKGROUND

Oakland's history of structural racism has created barriers to engagement and participation among low-income, Black, Indigenous and other communities of color. The barriers are multiplied for women, LGBTQ, people living with disabilities, and Limited English Speakers who are part of these racial groups.

The current state of community engagement is an outgrowth of Oakland's history. Significant decisions have been made by municipal and regional governments with limited participation from communities of color. As a result, community participation often comes about in the form of protest and resistance. For every injustice and experience with structural racism, Oakland communities have organized to resist and seek change.

Community engagement has been conducted in an ad-hoc way across the City, from formal Board, Commission and City Council Meetings to informal outreach and engagement activities often led by departmental Public Information Officers, or by other staff or consultants hired to lead City initiatives. Barring some baseline requirements that are mandated through policies such as the [Brown Act](#), the [Sunshine Ordinance](#), the [Equal Access Ordinance](#), and the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#), the City hasn't had systems or standards in place to support coordination and consistency in engagement activities across the organization.

In 2020 an interdepartmental group of City employees came together to coordinate our community engagement work across the City and identify tools and best practices for City staff so that we can better ask for and respond to community input. Building on work that has already been done with Oakland's diverse communities, this Administrative Instruction aims to provide City staff with the guidance needed to conduct equity-centered community engagement and reduce inequities in community access to City government.

POLICY

Projects and initiatives that have a direct impact on the community require some level of community outreach and engagement. These types of projects include:

- Policy changes that impact community;
- Strategic plans that change levels of service delivery;
- Master fee schedule changes that increase fines and fees;
- Online and offline service delivery changes;
- Planning or capital projects that re-imagine or reconfigure physical or online public space.

Departments will be required to determine the level of community engagement required for a given project and ensure they have procedures in place, a plan, and the necessary budget and staff capacity to support it. The Department of Race and Equity recommends the use of the [International Association for Public Participation \(IAP2\) "Spectrum of Public Participation"](#) to assess the best way to engage the public based on the desired outcome for the engagement activity. From "inform" to "empower," the spectrum shows increasing levels of stakeholder

inclusion in policy decisions, depending on the goals of a particular engagement activity. The spectrum helps to categorize activities based on best practice for inclusion. City staff should strive to offer residents activities along the full range of the spectrum.

Participants should be representative of the communities that will be most impacted by the projects and include community members that have been historically underserved or have not been represented in past processes. City staff and consultants that are hired by the City of Oakland are required to:

- Develop an engagement plan that defines an equitable vision and goals, works to understand key needs and priorities of the community, and develops key performance metrics;
- Set an equity goal for the project and identify the historically underserved and underrepresented communities that will be impacted by the project and the plan for reaching them;
- Develop outreach materials and communications that are simple and easy to understand:
 - Outreach materials need to be translated into the languages most used in the impacted communities and meet language requirements outlined in the Equal Access ordinance;
 - Outreach materials must be designed using the City style guide and brand assets;
 - Outreach materials and communications should be written at an 8th grade reading level or below
 - Outreach materials and locations should meet ADA accessibility guidelines established by the ADA programs division;
- Use multiple channels and outreach methods to ensure representative participation:
 - Digital tools must meet ADA accessibility guidelines established by the ADA programs division;
 - Social media outreach must comply with AI 599 (Social Media Policy)
 - Meeting and event spaces must be wheelchair accessible and allow for people to request disability-related accommodations, American Sign Language (ASL), Mandarin, Spanish or another language interpreter 5 days or more prior to the meeting or event;
- Collect racial and geographic demographic information related to participants in the process;
- Keep records of participants and organizations who have participated in the process;
- Document the feedback and input received during the engagement processes;
- Include information in Council Reports and follow up with participants about how their feedback and input was incorporated into any final decisions, outcomes or plans and how input from historically underrepresented groups was prioritized.

Engagement plans should align with the following best practices:

- **Realize the role of race, power, and injustice** – Activities validate community experience and history. When City staff understands the historical context and the roles that racism and inequality have played in the engagement experiences of community members they are better prepared to work with community members who experience the

power imbalances in their community. By validating the experiences of traditionally less powerful community members, and being intentional about removing barriers to participation, we can start to work together to change power dynamics towards racial equity.

- **Identify and prioritize relationships with and within under-represented communities, trusted community members, and respected community leaders** – Activities deepen existing relationships or establish new relationships with key communities. City staff should focus on identifying trusted advocates within these communities as well as organizations with a demonstrable track record of serving these communities. Staff should establish a process/working procedure to capture contacts, keep the information up to date, and sustain these new relationships. It is also helpful to discuss how this information will be shared with department staff.
- **Consult with under-represented community members during process design** – Activities are informed by community expertise. City staff can improve Oakland residents' well-being by ensuring that services meet their needs and aspirations and by creating policies that remove barriers or mitigate harm. Staff's work should focus on creating ways to collect, analyze and use evidence to shape service priorities and delivery, making sure community input is built into the design process. It also means moving beyond a solely data-driven approach to needs assessment, to one that is complemented by the views of those in the communities most impacted by the City's planned actions.
- **Start early with alternative methods for engagement** – The approach provides multiple ways for contributing input and feedback and engaging in direct communication with under-represented communities. Informal engagement events can help staff reach out to busy community members in a way that enables them to contribute and have an enjoyable experience. City staff should coordinate engagement processes and events with partners where appropriate, enabling information sharing, collaboration, and communications supported by a wide range of community agencies and trusted community advocates. This will help build trust, improve relationships, and create a culture of collaboration between the City and the community.
- **Maintain contact with the community** – City staff should do what it is possible to maintain good relationships with the community members interested in engaging in their project and other related aspects of City work. Work should build upon prior engagement activities conducted by the City, including closing feedback loops by reporting back on input received and progress made in response to that input. Staff should ask community members and organizations how they prefer to be contacted and use those communication channels to keep them updated on the project. Staff should establish themselves as a resource and always give people who have been involved in the process notice if the City does anything public that is relevant to the project, including issuing a press release or a report, testifying, publishing an op-ed, hosting an event, etc.

- **Remove barriers and create a welcoming atmosphere** – Activities take language and cultural practices into account and remove barriers to participation like location, accessibility, time, transportation, childcare, literacy, language interpretation, ASL, and power dynamics. Strive to have activities that reflect the culture of the community.
- **Partner with diverse organizations and agencies** – Activities leverage the opportunity to collaborate with organizations of color, and draw upon leadership from communities of color.

PROCEDURES

Responsible Party

Action

(City Administrator)

1. Required to designate at least one employee to coordinate the City's efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under this AI.
2. Required to convene an interdepartmental Inclusive Community Engagement Working Group at least 1 time per month to review Community Engagement plans and advance the City's inclusive engagement goals.
3. Required to maintain a Community Engagement Guidebook to support staff in their planning processes.
4. Required to provide tools for staff to use to track participation in community engagement processes.
5. Required to work with Organizational Development and Training to provide quarterly trainings on inclusive community engagement to support staff in using the tools and the guidebook.

(Department Directors)

1. Required to ensure that projects, policies or plans that will impact the public incorporate community engagement into their process.

2. Required to determine the level of community engagement required for a given project and ensure they have a plan and the necessary budget and staff capacity to support it.
3. Required to authorize pertinent staff to participate in the Inclusive Outreach and Engagement Working Group and participate in relevant training.

(Project Manager)

1. Required to develop an engagement plan that defines an equitable vision and goals, shows how they will prioritize key needs and priorities of the community, and develops key performance metrics.
2. Required to conduct an equity analysis to identify the historically underserved and underrepresented communities that will be impacted by the project and develop an outreach plan for reaching them.
3. Required to develop materials and communications that are simple, easy to understand, and accessible and translated for the communities impacted by the project.
4. Required to take their proposed community engagement plan, outreach strategy and materials to the Inclusive Community Engagement Working Group or Department Race and Equity Team for input and feedback.
5. Required to keep records of participation, feedback and input received, and racial and geographic demographics of participants.
6. Required to include information in Council Reports and follow up with participants about how their feedback and input was incorporated into any final decisions, outcomes or plans and how input from historically underrepresented groups was prioritized.

(Race & Equity)

1. Required to support staff in conducting an equity analysis to identify, collect, and assess baseline disparity data and develop equity-based

targets/benchmarks to ensure that engagements reach the historically underserved and underrepresented communities that will be impacted by the project.

(Inclusive Community Engagement Working Group)

2. Required to support staff on tracking and reporting inclusive outreach and engagement outcomes.
1. Required to facilitate activities and dialogue that build support and understanding of Inclusive Engagement Best Practices and Principles.
2. Required to provide technical support to staff who are undertaking inclusive outreach and engagement strategies and activities that involve outreach and engagement to historically underserved and underrepresented communities.

(ADA Programs)

1. Required to provide ADA accessibility guidelines for digital tools and communications.
2. Required to support staff in providing accessibility accommodations for in-person meetings and events.

(Equal Access)

1. Required to review staff's outreach strategies and provide guidance on language access requirements for printed and online materials.
2. Required to provide translation services to staff to meet the language access requirements.

DEFINITIONS

1. **The City** - The City of Oakland, its departments, leadership, staff and duly authorized boards and commissions.
2. **Community** - People affiliated by geographic proximity, specific interest, or similar situations affecting the wellbeing of those people; for equity focus they may also share a sense of membership, racial identity, culture, language, common norms and racial justice interests.
3. **Equity** - Just and fair inclusion, including increasing benefits and reducing burdens for those most impacted by racial disparities. An equitable society is one in which all participate and prosper. The goal of equity work is to create conditions that allow all to reach their full

potential. Equity requires system change that removes barriers to opportunity.

4. **Inclusive community engagement** – Efforts that remove barriers for marginalized communities that have previously prevented these communities from successfully influencing decision-making in City government to improve conditions in their lives.
5. **Inequity** - Differences in life outcomes and well-being that are the result of disadvantage for some and advantage for others because of historical and current systemic differences in access to opportunity.
6. **Racial disparity** - A measurable difference in life outcomes due to systemic and institutional action or inaction, that is racialized; not necessarily from intentional individual racial bias and/or prejudice.
7. **Systemic and institutional racism** - The pattern of social institution—such as governmental organizations, schools, banks and courts of law—that perpetuate negative treatment toward a group of people based on their race. Institutional racism leads to inequality in opportunity and inequity in life outcomes.
8. **Inclusion** -The practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those who have physical or mental disabilities and members of other minority groups.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Relevant City of Oakland Policies and Standards

- [Race and Equity in the City of Oakland](#) AI 580
- [Social Media Policy](#), AI 599
- [Media Relations Policy](#), AI 351
- [ADA Effective Communications Policy](#)
- [Disability Access Policy](#), AI 123
- [Equal Access to City Services](#), AI 145

Please direct any questions regarding this AI to the Department of Race & Equity at extension 2904.



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