

COMMUNITY INCLUSION GUIDANCE

Sustainable Transportation Equity Project (STEP) Applicants must directly engage community residents, including but not limited to the Community Partners,¹ in all phases of the STEP proposal’s development and implementation to ensure projects provide direct, meaningful, and assured benefits to STEP Community residents. While quantity of outreach and engagement is important, STEP Applicants should also prioritize the quality of their outreach and engagement, including targeted outreach and engagement to hard-to-reach residents.²

I. RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

The table on the following pages identifies some of the activities and actions that STEP Applicants and recipients can take to directly and meaningfully engage community residents in the development and implementation of STEP-funded projects. STEP Applicants should employ the combination of these activities that works best in their community’s context.

Applicants should consider which community engagement and outreach activities will be accessible to community residents, will make it easy for residents to participate or understand, and will reach the most residents, and in particular the most hard-to-reach residents.

Table 1: Recommended Community Inclusion Activities

	Community Engagement During Project Development or To Identify Transportation Needs	Community Engagement During Implementation	Outreach and Education
Advisory body or shared decision-making body	✓	✓	

¹ A community group, community resident, health-based organization, small business, or other in the community that, while not responsible for implementing projects funded through STEP like Lead Applicants and Co-applicants are, serves as a key stakeholder and representative of the STEP Community. Community Partners should have contributed to the development of the STEP proposal and should continue to participate in decision-making on all aspects of the STEP proposal throughout implementation.

² Residents whose interests, due to social, economic, and institutional barriers, have historically been under-represented.

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	Community Engagement During Project Development or To Identify Transportation Needs	Community Engagement During Implementation	Outreach and Education
Community-based participatory research and surveys	✓	✓	
Community and stakeholder meetings, webinars, and calls	✓	✓	✓
Community benefit agreements	✓		
Design charettes ³	✓	✓	
Door-to-door canvassing	✓	✓	✓
Educational events (e.g., ride and drives, bicycle rodeos, temporary street closures to encourage active transportation, workshops)			✓
Educational materials and information sharing (e.g., website, social media, flyers, signs in project area, radio, newspaper)	✓	✓	✓
Focus groups and listening sessions	✓	✓	
Outreach through existing community groups	✓	✓	✓
Participatory budgeting ⁴	✓		
Pop-up or demonstration projects and other forms of tactical urbanism	✓		✓

³ A meeting in which stakeholders work together to design a project or a solution to a particular challenge

⁴ A process by which community residents decide how to spend public dollars

	Community Engagement During Project Development or To Identify Transportation Needs	Community Engagement During Implementation	Outreach and Education
Stakeholder and end user trainings, tutorials, and videos			✓
Staff positions focused on community engagement, outreach, and education	✓	✓	✓
Subcontract with community-based organizations to conduct engagement or outreach	✓	✓	✓
Teach-ins ⁵	✓	✓	✓
Iteratively evaluate success of outreach and engagement strategies and update accordingly	✓	✓	✓

II. BEST PRACTICES

STEP Applicants should incorporate the following four principles into all aspects of community engagement:

- **Clarity:** Clear communication about the purpose of the community engagement, the project, and the community’s role in project planning and implementation.
- **Accessibility:** Accessible times and locations of events, meetings, and gatherings (e.g. virtual engagement when possible, evening meetings, meeting locations close to transit, neutral meeting locations) and accessible materials (e.g., language and ADA accessibility).
- **Representation:** Activities that reach a broad and representative subset of the whole community, including hard-to-reach residents that are not typically served well by existing public feedback processes.
- **Transparency:** Consistent, clear, and easily available information about community engagement activities, including notices before they happen and follow-up after they happen.

⁵ Educational, interactive forums where community residents learn about and discuss a specific topic

A. Resources

Applicants may refer to the following resources for more information on how to plan for and conduct community engagement and outreach.

- California Climate Investments Community Engagement Best Practices⁶
- SB 350 Outreach Roadmap⁷
- The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership⁸
- Spectrum of Public Participation⁹
- Institute for Local Government Inclusive Public Engagement¹⁰
- Just Communities provides extensive guidance on how to deliver multilingual outreach that supports language justice¹¹
- Nelson\Nygaard Principles for Equitable Public Outreach and Engagement During COVID-19 and Beyond¹²
- Salt Lake City's Best Practices for Engagement During COVID-19¹³

B. Best Practices for Physically Distant Engagement

STEP Applicants should heed all State and local public health recommendations. STEP Applicants should use a mix of community engagement and outreach methods and tools to help ensure that community residents are appropriately involved, particularly when it may be especially challenging to actively involve hard-to-reach residents. This may mean that Applicants will need to rely on:

- **Virtual Engagement:** Where in-person community engagement is not possible, STEP Applicants are encouraged to use virtual means to gather information from community residents. This may be through public meetings held via teleconference or webinar, online surveys, email, phone calls, text surveys, social media, or other means. Applicants should consider who may be excluded from participating in virtual community engagement activities (e.g., the elderly, people with limited internet access) and find other methods to ensure their views are represented such as direct calls and mailed materials.

⁶ <https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/cc/capandtrade/auctionproceeds/cci-community-leadership-bestpractices.pdf>

⁷ <https://ww3.arb.ca.gov/msprog/truckstop/pdfs/carbsb350outreachroadmap.pdf>

⁸ <https://movementstrategy.org/b/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Spectrum-2-1-1.pdf>

⁹ https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/pillars/Spectrum_8.5x11_Print.pdf

¹⁰ <https://www.ca-ilg.org/inclusive-public-engagement>

¹¹ <https://www.just-communities.org/lji>

¹² <https://nelsonnygaard.com/principles-for-equitable-public-outreach-engagement-during-covid-19-and-beyond/>

¹³ <https://www.slc.gov/can/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2020/04/Best-Practices-for-Engagement-During-COVID-19.pdf>

- **Notices:** Consider virtual and analog methods to inform residents of virtual engagement (e.g., emails and posting flyers around the proposed project area or at nearby community centers, social media, and notices on utility bills).
- **Communication:** Community engagement is about both informing community residents and hearing from community residents, so Applicants should make sure that any virtual engagement activities are set up for two-way communication. Public meetings should be set up so that attendees can easily speak or write in their ideas and feedback. Short online surveys are another helpful way to get quick information from residents.
- **Past Engagement:** Where virtual and in-person community engagement are not possible, STEP Applicants are encouraged to use information collected from past community engagement activities to inform proposal development and project design. Past community engagement may have been done through a more formal process (e.g., as part of the development of a Transportation Plan, General or Specific Plan, Climate Action Plan, or Sustainable Communities Strategy; via Community Air Protection Program – AB 617 Steering Committee meetings) or through a more informal process.

C. Best Practices for Transparency When Incorporating Feedback

A crucial part of any community engagement activity is reporting back to community residents on how their feedback was incorporated into project design and implementation. STEP Applicants should plan to incorporate a transparent process to report back to community residents on takeaways from community engagement activities and how these takeaways were incorporated into project development and implementation.

- **Transparency:** Report-back information should be easily available to anyone from the public that is interested, regardless of whether they were able to participate in the community engagement process, and translated into other languages if necessary. The practice of transparency can help hold organizations accountable and build trusting relationships between community residents and local implementers.
- **Report-backs:** May include posting recordings of online engagement activities, descriptions of how project design was changed based on stakeholder input, and Frequently Asked Questions or Question and Answer documents online. May also include hosting public meetings after community engagement activities have occurred to share takeaways. Report-back information may be provided by multiple attendees to reflect differing perspectives. All report-backs and follow-ups should be planned,

consistently communicated, and conducted with a clear indication of the intended purpose and a focus on solutions.

- **Audience:** Consider who participated in community engagement, and make sure the information that is being reported is accessible to those residents in particular. This may include having direct, one-on-one conversations as well as holding larger public meetings or posting publicly available materials. Direct communication can help ensure that feedback received was properly understood and satisfactorily incorporated and can further strengthen relationships.

D. Best Practices for Evaluating Success

Evaluating success of outreach and engagement activities and adapting the activities used based on that evaluation is an important part of any community inclusion process. STEP Applicants should plan to regularly evaluate their community inclusion activities to ensure that their engagement process is actually resulting in projects that community residents want and support.

- **Audience:** Track and maintain more granular information on the participants of community engagement activities, such as the city or zip code participants live in, range of organizations represented, and demographic data. Understanding the demographics of the residents that are being reached by the community engagement activities can help identify gaps in engagement and support creation of a more inclusive and strategic plan for additional community engagement.
 - **Quality:** Don't confuse quantity with quality. While the goal should be to engage a wide swath of community residents in STEP-funded projects, targeted engagement of specific groups of community residents can be important to make sure that all residents' needs and ideas are being heard. Smaller meetings can also be incredibly effective for relaying information and building a long-lasting relationship that can reap benefits for a longer period of time.
- **Groundtruthing:** Groundtruthing is the practice of confirming project details directly with stakeholders to ensure feedback has been appropriately incorporated. STEP recipients are encouraged to use groundtruthing to find out if community-identified transportation needs are being addressed as intended and if the community inclusion process is sufficiently transparent. Groundtruthing strategies may include many of the community engagement activities identified earlier in this document, including door-to-door surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions.

E. Best Practices for Educational Materials

STEP Applicants should plan to use educational materials to help community residents use new transportation services and directly participate in decision-making processes during project development and implementation.

- **Content:** Content in educational materials will vary based on the purpose of the materials. However, when conducting community engagement to identify community residents' transportation needs, STEP Applicants and recipients should make sure to define the various transportation options available in the STEP Community (both existing services and potential future services) and outline the advantages and disadvantages to each option. Having this information will help residents actively participate in decision-making to identify and prioritize the clean transportation and supporting projects that will best meet their transportation needs.
- **Accessibility:** STEP recipients should display information on their websites and printed materials in a way that is accessible to the broader public. Use clear and simple language, avoid jargon and acronyms as much as possible, and write at an accessible reading level. Keep statutory and background information at the bottom of the page.
 - **Translation:** Materials should be translated into the common languages spoken in that community. Use the EPA Environmental Justice screening tool¹⁴ to determine languages spoken in any area.
 - **Visuals:** Consider when infographics and other accessible data visuals may be the best way to share information, especially if it is quantitative or technical.
- **Distribution of Materials:** Using existing relationships between community residents and community groups is a valuable way to distribute educational materials and conduct outreach and engagement. Training residents to be ambassadors for STEP-funded projects can help improve participation in community engagement activities and in use of the funded services. Consider incorporating ways for community members to utilize their long-standing relationships to educate and inform their neighbors on funded transportation services and on how to engage with project development and implementation.

III. INCENTIVES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Providing incentives for community residents to participate in community engagement activities is important to appropriately and explicitly value the time and information residents provide as an essential element in understanding specific transportation

¹⁴ <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper>

needs and developing successful projects. Incentives can also boost the quantity and quality of participation in community engagement activities.

During implementation of STEP-funded projects, community engagement participants who are not already being paid for their participation (including identified Community Partners and other community residents, members of community groups and community-based organizations, community leaders, and members of environmental justice organizations) should receive appropriate incentives for their time and expertise.

STEP funds may be used to pay for many but not all of the recommendations below. See the Appendix E: Project Eligibility in the STEP solicitation for a full list of eligible and ineligible costs. CARB recommends that STEP Grantees use resource contributions to fill the funding gaps that STEP funds cannot fill.

CARB's expectations for community engagement incentives are outlined in the recommendations below.

A. Guiding Principles

- Compensation that is provided to all attendees of an event should be provided in a way that maximizes participation and attentiveness (e.g., distribute gift cards after the end of a meeting or after collecting completed surveys).
- The nature of the compensation, instructions for receipt and use, any relevant restrictions, and other key information must be clearly explained to all attendees or recipients.
- For targeted or variable compensation, the actions, activities, and criteria a participant must undertake or meet to receive the compensation should be clearly communicated to all participants before community engagement participation begins. For example, explain at the beginning of the meeting that only participants that fill out a survey at the end of the meeting will receive a gift card.

B. Community Resident Participation

STEP Grantees should provide resources or subsidies to help ensure that community residents have what they need to be able to attend and actively participate in community engagement activities. These resources may include:

- Offering transportation (preferred) or providing a subsidy for transportation services (e.g. shuttle, vanpool, carshare) or travel in personal vehicles to and from in-person events
- Subsidizing lodging needed for longer-distance travel for in-person events under special circumstances
- Offering food at events (preferred) or providing a standard subsidy for food to replace meal missed by attending an in-person event
- Offering childcare at events (preferred) or providing a standard subsidy for childcare so parents and guardians can attend in-person events

STEP Grantees should also provide monetary incentives for time spent participating in community engagement activities. Monetary incentives may be provided via gift cards. At minimum, incentives should be based on the number of hours in attendance at community engagement activities. Minimum incentives should be worth one hour of time. Incentives may be based on the living wage by county,¹⁵ and rounded up to the nearest multiple of five dollars (e.g., \$20, \$25).

Hourly rate may increase based on the level of participation or in proportion to the level of engagement required of different community engagement activities. For example, participation in more formal advisory or steering committees may require a more intensive commitment of time and resources that warrants larger incentives. Residents that participate in more formal advisory or steering committees may also be required to complete other tasks relevant to the committees, such as conflict of interest declarations and outreach to other community residents and community groups. Another example of when an increased level of participation may warrant a higher hourly rate is if a participant provides additional services during the community engagement activity as part of a distinct role, such as meeting or survey facilitator, note-taker, translator, or host.

STEP Grantees may also provide prizes to incentivize participation and increase the level of involvement in community engagement activities. Prizes could be distributed via raffles, trivia, or other similar games. Prizes could be distributed to community members in return for deliverables such as a completed survey or feedback form. CARB may choose to set monetary limits on prizes in its sole discretion. Prizes should be relevant to the targeted audience (e.g., backpacks with school supplies for students, money towards the use of a carsharing service for carshare users).

¹⁵ <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>