

# Metro's Public Engagement Guide

**Partial draft for review**

January 2024

Metro commits to meaningful public participation because of its power to produce impactful benefits to present and future generations.

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## SECTION 1 - ABOUT THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

### Introduction

The Public Engagement Guide is a flexible tool with information to enable meaningful connections and collaboration between individuals and Metro staff, the Metro Council, local governments, local businesses, and non-profit organizations. Metro is committed to advancing racial equity, climate resilience and building shared prosperity for our communities.

Public participation and input is important to plan for the future of transportation, parks and nature, waste and recycling, housing, and art and culture venues. Members of the public can use the guide to get informed, find opportunities to get involved and hold Metro accountable for its role as a regional government.

The Metro Council, staff, and Metro advisory committees use the guide along with other policies across the organization to plan and carry out engagement activities. The guide will strengthen Metro's engagement practices. It will help ensure we are supporting policymakers to make informed decisions.

This guide supports Metro's efforts toward restoration of past harms and accountability to the people we serve. It also offers an opportunity to create shared understanding about basic engagement terminology and best practices for inclusive and meaningful public engagement.

### Desired outcomes

- ✓ People have accessible information and meaningful opportunities to participate in programs, services, or decision-making processes at Metro.
- ✓ Metro creates welcoming spaces that encourage civic leadership and connection through community-led activities and capacity building.
- ✓ Support the Metro Council in making decisions that are well-informed and responsive to the needs of the diverse communities and perspectives of greater Portland.

### About the guide

The guidance found in this document is for use by Metro staff, the Metro Council, partners, and the public. This guide features three main sections and an appendix:

#### Section 1 – About the Public Engagement Guide

Provides background information on the creation of the guide and presents Metro's Guiding Principles for Meaningful Public Engagement.

#### Thank you to the Public Engagement Review Committee

The Public Engagement Review Committee advised Metro staff and Council on the content of this guide. The committee is tasked with advising Metro Council on engagement practices and is made up of representatives from Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. Members in 2023-24 included:

*Community members:* Carine Arendes, Isaiah Jackman, Makerusa Porotesano, Michael Foley

*Community based organizations:* Alisa Kajikawa with APANO, Diana Ospina Lara with Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber, Henry Miller with The Street Trust

*Local government staff:* Amanda Garcia Snell with Washington County, Cameron Ruen with Clackamas County, JR Lilly with Multnomah County

## **Section 2** – Information for community members: be informed, get involved

Provides information about Metro’s departments, current projects, or community advisory committees to support community members and partners who want to be informed or get involved. It includes information for residents, businesses and other community partners.

## **Section 3** – Planning for public engagement: a guide for Metro staff

Provides guidance for Metro staff to inform the planning, delivery and evaluation of public engagement activities for programs, policies and investments.

## **Appendix** – Supplemental tools and resources

Provides a list of supporting information and resources for users of the guide.

Also, the guide will have boxes with a “language check!” to explain the use of key terms like “meaningful engagement.” Below is the first of these language checks.

### **Language check!**

**Public:** The term in this guide is inclusive of all people, businesses, non-profit organizations, or local governments regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, income level, disability, or immigration status.

**Community(ies):** This term can refer to all members of the public broadly or used to describe specific groups that have a shared characteristic like connection to a place, identity, social experience, language, or practice.

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### **Using public vs. community in the guide**

Theoretically both terms can describe all people served within Metro’s service boundary. Public or community can include marginalized groups and historically empowered groups.

In practice, an unexamined use of either word to group all audiences too broadly can lead to unintended consequences, such as applying the use of ineffective communications or engagement tactics or further marginalizing people the perpetuation of marginalization due to the lasting social and institutional impacts of systemic discrimination and inequality.

To address this complex reality, Metro will use “**community engagement**” in this guide specifically for engagement activities that seek to include groups who are and have been systemically marginalized from participating in the identification of regional issues, or the solutions to address them.

This includes youth, elders, immigrants, communities of color, the LGBTQIA2S+ community, Tribal governments, people living with disabilities, people who live with low incomes, or people who are living unhoused.

## **Updating the guide**

Once the 2024 guide is adopted it is expected to be reviewed every three to five years starting in 2027. The guide must go through a 45 public comment period. Adoption by Metro Council through a resolution is recommended.

## Guide history and changes at Metro

### Past versions of the guide

Metro is required to adopt and periodically update a public engagement guide as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization by the State of Oregon and the United States Federal Highway Association. The purpose of the guide is to inform and involve the public in regional transportation planning as one of the conditions of receiving federal grant funds to reallocate to local cities and counties to build transportation improvement projects.

Metro adopted its first Public Engagement Guide, formerly known as Public Involvement Policy for Transportation Planning, in 1995 and updated it in 2004 and 2009. The last version of the Public Engagement Guide was adopted in 2013 after a period of research, community outreach activities and a public comment period.

In 2019, during the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro did not conduct a full update to the guide; instead, Metro informed the public about regional transportation planning work within a document called [\*“Be involved in building a better system for getting around greater Portland.”\*](#) The relevant information in that document is updated and included in the current version of the guide.

### What led to changes in the 2024 version?

The 2024 guide generally follows a similar structure to the 2013 version. The similarities include a list of guiding principles, information for the public’s benefit, guidance for staff on how to plan and evaluate engagement activities, and an appendix with supplemental resources. The updates in this guide reflect best practices for public participation.

Also, it’s important to mention that Metro’s work is shifting overtime and is now guided by several new guiding policies, such as:

- The [Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) (summary attached in Appendix A).
- The [2030 Regional Waste Plan](#).
- The Strategic Framework.
- The [2018 Affordable Housing Bond](#)
- The [2019 Parks and Nature Parks Bond](#).
- Updates to the Regional Transportation Plan and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

Below is a list of some of the major changes in the organization, since 2013, that influence Metro’s community outreach practices:

- Metro, as the region’s designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, receives guidance from the United States Federal Highway Administration as part of their responsibilities for regional transportation planning. The most recent guidance related to the public engagement guide include:

*Space for storytelling*

- Simplify the guide through summaries, visuals, and other techniques to ensure the information is easy to understand for the widest possible audience.
- Inform the public about Metro's outreach efforts at key decision points in the regional transportation planning work.
- Include information about all of Metro's service departments.
- Include explicit procedures for outreach with traditionally underserved populations.
- Include criteria or a process to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities.
- Conduct a 45-day public comment period before adopting the new public engagement guide.
- In 2016 Metro adopted the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. (See summary in Appendix A). The application of the Strategic Plan led to more opportunities for community members, such as advisory committees for government oversight; culturally specific education programs; community partnerships with organizations that are led by Black people, Indigenous people, people of color or young people; improved access to parks and nature and improvements to waste collection services; and participation in regional transportation planning.

The goals of the plan are:

- Goal A: Metro convenes and supports regional partners to advance racial equity.
- Goal B: Metro meaningfully engages communities of color.
- Goal C: Metro hires, trains and promotes a racially diverse workforce.
- Goal D: Metro creates safe and welcoming services, programs and destinations.
- Goal E: Metro's resource allocation advances racial equity.
- In 2021, Metro developed a tool called the Racial Equity Framework to support staff in applying an equity lens to project planning. This planning tool ensures staff considers resources, impact, research, and critical questions about public engagement early in their project planning processes. This tool includes a worksheet, tools, resources, and step-by-step instructions for applying the framework. (Appendix B)
- Staff trainings, guidance, and new procedures:
  - All staff are required to receive yearly trainings on racial equity and gender inclusion.
  - Staff also have access to optional training opportunities that include trauma informed care, climate resilience, public participation, racial equity conferences, Tribal Government Affairs and other topics related to Metro's work.
  - Metro created guidelines to simplify contracting processes for community partnerships and reduce barriers for participation including hosting public engagement events or activities such as providing childcare, providing translation and interpretation services, offering transportation or participation stipends, and meaningfully including community members in decision-making processes.
- In 2019, a COVID-19 Community Engagement Policy was created to consider the global public health crisis in decisions about public engagement. The policy reflects Metro's commitment to the advancement of racial equity through inclusive engagement within the context of a public health crisis. The policy calls for Metro to apply practices that make it possible for Black people, Indigenous people and people of color to reclaim and use their power to influence needed changes in their community.
- In 2020, Metro launches a pilot program to build capacity within community-based organizations through a three-year Civic Engagement Grant.

- In 2021, Metro hires a Tribal Policy Liaison to build a formal process to involve and Consult Tribes as independent government partners. Metro seeks to invite Tribes to participate in key regional decisions that may impact cultural resources, treaty rights or otherwise be of interest to Tribes. Besides strengthening Metro's efforts for government-to-government relationship building with Tribes, there is also an increase in trainings and opportunities for staff to learn about Tribal affairs and about engaging with Urban Indigenous community members.
- The unequal impacts from the global COVID-19 pandemic, the wildfires in Oregon in 2020, and the international racial uprisings after the killing of George Floyd by a police officer during an arrest attempt, have continued to deepen our collective understanding about the need to lead with race in regional governance.
  - For example, Metro has made improvements to security practices at the Metro Regional Center and developed an exclusion policy against hateful speech or behavior at public garbage and recycling transfer stations to make Metro buildings more welcoming and safer for Black, Indigenous, Asian-American, and people of color, English language learners and houseless folks.
- In 2023, eight new Guiding Principles for Meaningful Public Engagement were adopted by the Metro Council. The update integrates the guidance from members of the Public Engagement Review Committee made up of local government staff, community partners and community members, along with input from the Metro Council and Metro staff. The new guiding principles served as foundation for the Public Engagement Guide in 2024.
  - Metro last adopted guiding principles for citizen involvement in 1997. During the update of the 2013 Public Engagement Guide, 12 guiding principles were updated and the essence of those is infused within the new list. Guiding principles of the COVID 19 Community Engagement Policy are embedded within the new guiding principles for meaningful public engagement. More information on the intended application of the guiding principles is included in this guide.



## Metro's Guiding Principles for Meaningful Public Engagement

1. Public participation is an essential part of Metro's decision-making.
2. Transparency about decision-making is fundamental to successful public service and includes communicating about project outcomes and the impact of community contributions to the process.
3. Meaningful public engagement processes apply equity, diversity and inclusion strategies and tools to help identify and address the needs of impacted, underserved, and historically excluded communities.
4. Engagement and communications are accessible, informative, timely and inclusive of a rich diversity of lived experiences and perspectives.
5. Collaboration and capacity-building efforts with community-based organizations, programs, initiatives, and individuals that are impacted, underserved, or historically excluded are essential to address regional issues equitably.
6. Intergovernmental collaboration, coordination, and consultation are essential to address regional issues holistically and efficiently.
7. Evaluation of engagement activities during and after a project encourages responsiveness, growth, and process improvement.
8. Adaptive project timelines allow for meaningful engagement with the most impacted audiences early and throughout the project.

*The guiding principles inform the planning and carrying out of virtual and in-person public engagement activities. They create a foundation to sustain an equitable and democratic culture of collaboration and accountability at Metro.*

Metro's priorities are to advance racial equity, climate resilience and shared prosperity within the services offered to the public. The guiding principles reflect Metro's values in how we communicate and engage with the diverse communities we serve.

The success of Metro's engagement efforts depends on the ability to meet people where they are and to consider people's needs and diverse lived experiences in decisions about services, programs, policies, or investments.

To serve diverse audiences, Metro must be able to adapt to the engagement and communication needs of diverse groups and community members it serves. This is complicated not only in terms of language, accessibility for people with disabilities, choosing effective communications channels, meeting locations and times, but also because people might only want information, while others may want to weigh in or get involved more closely. Some people who could benefit from Metro's services might not be open to engage given a lack of trust towards governments or varying levels of personal perspectives and experiences. Many people are not aware about Metro or that they can make a difference.

The principles were created collaboratively to consider these complexities while maintaining a clear commitment to transparency and Metro's values and responsibilities as a regional public leader.

### Putting the guiding principles into practice

Many factors affect how we engage with people, businesses, non-profits or government partners. Besides needing tools to adapt to the communications needs of diverse groups of people, each department at Metro is also unique, so each new project has a different focus, timeline, goals, and potential geographic or community impact. Each will have unique staff teams, resources, and decision-making pathways. The potential partners or key audiences invited to participate in each project will usually vary based on the goals and potential impacts of each project – as well as people’s interest and ability to stay engaged.

Metro staff should review the following information in addition to Section 3 “Guidance for staff: planning for public engagement,” when planning for new projects. This information will help staff assess their needs and decide what communications or public outreach approach might be most effective for their project.

The information in the next table serves as general guidance that Metro staff, the Metro Council, and partners should consider about public engagement within projects or programs. The information serves as context for users of the guide about the intention behind each principle when they were created. The information includes combined input received from the Public Engagement Review Committee, the Committee on Racial Equity, Metro staff and the Metro Council regarding public engagement practices.

This information can be interpreted and applied to each project on a case-by-case basis.

#### Language check!

The guiding principles call for Metro to meaningfully engage with people. What does that mean?

**Meaningful public engagement** is inclusive of all potentially impacted perspectives. It is rooted in nurturing relationships, taking into consideration the communication and engagement needs of participants. It acknowledges the role trauma plays in people's lives. Meaningful public engagement requires transparency with participants about how their input can affect how decisions are made.

Principle	Desired outcomes of principle	Putting it into practice
1	<p>For people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> People use their power to affect changes they need.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Metro’s decisions address the needs of the diverse communities they serve.</li></ul> <p>For Metro</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Staff, Metro Council and partners are informed about the needs of the diverse communities they serve.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Metro develops sustainable, equitable and impactful policies.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public engagement and communications are adequately resourced within budgets.</li><li>• Metro acknowledges that solving complex regional issues, restoring past harms, requires a civically engaged public.</li><li>• Public engagement is valued as part of the technical project management processes.</li><li>• Metro offers ongoing engagement opportunities beyond specific projects.</li></ul>
2	<p>For people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Information of interest is easy to find and easy to understand.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> People can generally understand what major decisions are being made and how Metro arrived at the decision.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Metro’s website is accessible and easy to navigate.</li><li>• Public information requests are address in a timely manner.</li><li>• Summary reports are understandable and easily accessible.</li><li>• Documents are provided in multiple languages relevant to key audiences.</li></ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Participants feel their time and input is valued post-engagement.  For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Metro is accountable to the communities they serve. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro maintains and advances internal practices that facilitate public information-sharing in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>New or ongoing projects:</i> Metro clearly describes project goals, key decision-points, decision-making structures, and the purpose for public engagement within the larger processes. People are informed about the potential impact public input can have.</li> <li>• <i>After project completion:</i> Metro regularly shares information about what informed major decisions, who was engaged, and major trade-offs considered within the process. Metro reports back to participants they engaged and the public.</li> </ul>
3	For people <input type="checkbox"/> Communities participate or lead in developing the solutions to complex regional problems based on their lived experience. <input type="checkbox"/> Harm during or after engagement processes is avoided and addressed if it happens. <input type="checkbox"/> The needs of those most highly impacted with least institutional power are prioritized.  For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Metro advances the Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro works towards accountability and repair of past harms. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro practices people-centered approaches to governance <input type="checkbox"/> Metro ensure compliance with Civil Rights Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro staff apply a racial equity strategy to their planning processes to avoid common negative impacts of systemic exclusion of historically marginalized groups.</li> <li>• Metro hires a workforce that is representative of the communities they serve.</li> <li>• Staff has access to useful trainings such as trauma-informed care, popular education, Tribal government consultation, or racial, gender and disability justice.</li> <li>• Metro develops processes for addressing trauma or harm that happens during engagement activities.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tools to consider:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro's Racial Equity Framework (with power-mapping guidance)</li> <li>• The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership by Rosa Gonzalez</li> <li>• <u>White Supremacy Culture</u> by Tema Okun.</li> </ul>
4	For people <input type="checkbox"/> Information of interest is easy to find and reasonably understandable. <input type="checkbox"/> People of different backgrounds and lived experiences feel included and see themselves represented in Metro's work.  For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Metro creates welcoming a environment for people, avoiding exclusionary engagement practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Increase public participation in Metro projects and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro applies inclusive communications strategies and tools, that ensure people with different needs and abilities can be informed or get involved.</li> <li>• Metro reduces or eliminates common barriers to participation.</li> <li>• Non-English speakers can meaningfully participate.</li> <li>• Metro hosts gatherings that are trauma informed and responsive to the unique language and cultural norms of participants.</li> <li>• Metro invests in supporting staff through trainings, tools, and research.</li> <li>• Staff are culturally responsive to prevent harm while navigating social interactions.</li> <li>• Resources are directed for capacity building and non-project specific activities.</li> </ul>
5	For people <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals grow their civic leadership and are better able to assert their power toward justice and liberation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro participates in mutually beneficial and co-created community partnerships.</li> <li>• Metro ensures community partners, are well-resourced to meet project goals and outcomes, and to reduce burn-out.</li> </ul>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Community organizations persist as a community asset. For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Metro advances shared prosperity through capacity building. <input type="checkbox"/> Increases participation by historically excluded residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro makes decisions that are well-informed by the needs of the people they serve. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro directs resources towards non-project specific engagement activities for ongoing relationship building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro works to reduce barriers to participation for individuals.</li> <li>• Metro's engagement practices support civic leadership development in individuals.</li> </ul>
6	For people <input type="checkbox"/> Regional issues such as transportation, housing, waste management, parks and nature and civic leadership are addressed in a holistic manner. <input type="checkbox"/> People engaged at various levels of government have a similar experience. For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Metro contributes to a culture of civic leadership as a regional convener.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a regional government, Metro convenes city, county, state, and Tribal governments to address regional issues holistically and efficiently.</li> <li>• Metro honors the unique needs, experience, and geographic connection of partner agencies, such as city, county, and Tribal governments, to the communities they serve.</li> <li>• Metro consults with local Tribes as sovereign nations applying a government-to-government relationship approach.</li> </ul>
7	For people <input type="checkbox"/> People can influence improvements to government processes through participation in evaluations. For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Staff develop shared learning and improve engagement practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Staff are innovative and responsive. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro staff practice self-reflection and avoid perfectionism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro works with partners to define goals and metrics to measure effectiveness of engagement and communications practices.</li> <li>• Metro staff seeks participant feedback after engagement opportunities and adapts as needed.</li> <li>• Metro staff have the space in their work plan to practice self-reflection.</li> <li>• Metro works to improve organizational culture through collaboration, clear communication and avoiding perfectionism.</li> </ul>
8	For people <input type="checkbox"/> People feel like their time and input is valued. <input type="checkbox"/> People gain trust for Metro's decisions and work. For Metro <input type="checkbox"/> Staff gain knowledge to improve future engagement and communications activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Metro works toward people-centered approaches to governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Metro responds to unexpected information or situations whenever possible.</li> <li>• Public input can influence a change in direction of a project.</li> <li>• Timelines may be shortened if staff or Council have the necessary information to understand the impacts of their decisions, or when responding to an unexpected emergent need such as a natural disaster or public health crisis.</li> </ul>

## Appendix A

## Legal requirements and guidelines for the public engagement guide

*Metro is required to adopt and periodically update a public engagement guide as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization by the State of Oregon and the United States Federal Highway Association.*

### Legal responsibilities and guidelines

This Public Engagement Guide establishes consistent guidelines to ensure people have meaningful opportunities to be involved in the regional planning process. The guide also provides examples of the tools and techniques that Metro may use to communicate with and receive input from the public.

Following the Federal Highway Administration, 23 CFR 450.316(a), this guide serves as Metro's documented, "process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process."

In accordance with the Federal Transit Administration circular, FTA C 4702.1B, this guide serves as Metro's documented, "outreach plan to engage minority and limited English proficient populations, as well as a summary of outreach efforts made since the last Title VI Program submission. A recipient's targeted public participation plan for minority populations may be part of efforts that extend more broadly to include other constituencies that are traditionally underserved, such as people with disabilities, low-income populations, and others."

### Federal requirements

- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), public Law 112-141 as passed by Congress and signed by President Barack Obama on July 6, 2012.
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), (included in Appendix C for more information).
- Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 23 USC 140, 23 CFR 200, and 49 CFR 21.
- Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations, signed Feb. 11, 1994 by President Bill Clinton.
- Executive Order 13166 – Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, signed Aug. 11, 2000 by President Bill Clinton.
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, 42 USC 126 and 49 CFR 27.19.
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 USC. Sections 6101-6107.

### Oregon state requirements

- Administrative Rules of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development Commission, Oregon Statewide Goal 1 - Citizen Involvement, OAR 660.
- Oregon Revised Statute Comprehensive Land Use Planning Coordination, ORS 197.
- Oregon Revised Statute Local Government Planning Coordination; Coordination Agreements, ORS 195.020 to 195.040.
- Oregon Revised Statute Opportunity for Public Comment on New Fee or Fee Increase, ORS 294.160.
- Oregon Transportation Plan Public Involvement Policy (2009).
- Public Records Act, ORS 192.410 to 192.505.
- Public Meetings Law, ORS 192.610 to 192.690.

#### **Metro requirements**

- Metro Charter, Office of Citizen Involvement.
- Resolution No. 97-2433, Metro Citizen Involvement Principles.
- Ordinance No. 12-1275, Establishing the Metro Public Engagement Review Committee.
- Resolution No.12-4375, Metro Diversity Action Plan.
- Resolution No. 16-4708, Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Resolution No. 19-1431, the 2030 Regional Waste Plan
- Resolution No. 23-5331, Metro's New Guiding Principles for Meaningful Public Engagement
- Resolution No. 22-5293, Incorporating Inclusive and Plain Language Best Practices