Appendix H – Evaluation for Public Engagement Activities

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Contents

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION GUIDE

This appendix is for Metro staff to use to assess the effectiveness of their engagement and communication strategies. Metro's Guiding Principle for Meaningful Public Engagement #7 states that "evaluation of engagement activities during and after a project encourages responsiveness, growth, and process improvement." Evaluating engagement strategies and tactics helps Metro double check if we are being responsive to what we hear from community members and evaluating project processes helps us know if Metro is addressing the needs of those we serve as we apply technical expertise, research, and public input about Metro's work.

The desired outcomes for Guiding Principle #7 listed in Appendix B are:

- People can influence improvements to government processes by participating in evaluations.
- Metro staff develop shared learning opportunities and improve engagement practices.
- Metro staff are innovative and responsive to public input and community needs.
- Metro staff practice self-reflection and avoid perfectionism.

Appendix B also says that in practice, this can look like:

- Metro works with partners to define goals and metrics to measure effectiveness of engagement and communications practices.
- Metro staff seek participant feedback after engagement opportunities and adapt practices as needed.
- Metro staff have the space in their work plan to practice self-evaluation.
- Metro works to improve its culture by collaborating, clearly communicating, and avoiding perfectionism.

Public engagement evaluation criteria

Criteria

Metro staff should consider the criteria listed below to evaluate effectiveness of their engagement strategies. The evaluation criteria is split up into three focus areas related to engagement: relationship building, communications, and involving underserved communities. Each focus area has a list of potential evaluation questions. Within each focus area, we consider the evaluation of the processes, outcomes and the application of public input received which all should be considered within a larger engagement strategy.

Metro staff have access to project management tools that include a Project Evaluation Users Guide meant to evaluate the success of the overall project against project objectives and deliverables focusing mainly on the internal process and project outcomes. The project evaluation guide includes the following community engagement and communications

considerations: *Were stakeholders engaged appropriately? Was communication clear and timely? Did project stakeholders feel fully informed during the life of the project?*

This appendix H provides support with answering those and other more specific questions related to engagement, communications, and equity within engagement processes. Staff should review the lists and select the criteria that best meet their project needs. If working with a community partner to implement engagement strategies, it is recommended to invite their participation in evaluation by either reviewing or co-creating a public engagement evaluation strategy.

Focus area 1: Evaluating effectiveness of virtual and in-person engagement activities.

This focus area includes engagement activities to intentionally solicit public input and include two-way communication opportunities. Examples include discussion groups, public forums, open house events, focus groups, presentations to existing community groups, Metro hosted community advisory groups, surveys, comment periods or information sessions. This also includes secondary or tertiary connections to people or organizations that result from the outreach efforts.

- *Were efforts made to engage those most affected by the program, project or service?*
- *If engaging for a decision-making process, were people invited to share input in advance of each decision-making milestone? And was that input shared directly with decision-makers at meetings?*
- *Were referrals (new connections to community members) received from partners, stakeholders, or community organizations?*
- *If community-based organizations joined as partners in your process, did they take part in or opt out of developing an evaluation criterion?*
- *If a survey was used, how many people answered the survey? What were their demographics?*
- *How many people attended a public meeting, discussion group, or open house?*
- *Were in-person activities held at ADA accessible locations?*
- *Were in-person activities held and facilitated with ADA accessibility in mind? How?*
- *Were in-person activities held at community hubs that may be feel most welcoming to target audiences? Were the locations easy to find?*
- *Were in-person and virtual events held during accessible times for the target audiences?*
- *Were there hybrid or online engagement opportunities provided?*
- *How many comments were received through a public comment period?*
- *Were community organizations or businesses engaged and offered materials to share with their networks using multiple formats?*
- *What was uncovered about the issue, proposal or program as a result of public input?*
  - *Was there support? What worked well? What should be changed?*
  - *Did public input result in modifications or changes to the project?*

- *What was the demographic make-up of participants?*
- *Did public involvement activities help build the capacity of people to participate in future public processes?*
- *Did participants express interest in staying involved with this project, or other Metro initiatives?*
- *Did people feel their involvement was considered/acted upon?*

Focus area 2: Evaluate effectiveness of communications tactics.

This focus area includes communications tactics and tools that seek to inform the public about Metro activities and includes communications tactics that support engagement strategies. Examples include virtual or printed communications tools such as web sites, social media posts, MetroNews, and accompanying designed materials like flyers, information sheets, postcards, media coverage or email updates.

- *Were people informed about who to contact with questions about the project?*
- *How many people visited the project website?*
- *How many people subscribed or unsubscribed to receive email project updates? Did the list grow?*
    - *How many people clicked through the emails sent out to subscribers to the website or survey?*
- *Was information clearly advertised on social media sites? How many @replies, mentions, or comments on social media were received?*
    - *Was an advertisement budget used for social media platforms?*
- *Was the formal public comment period advertised per federal requirements?*
- *How many comments were received via email?*
- *Were communications materials designed with ADA and language accessibility in mind?*
    - *Were materials or virtual communications translated and reviewed by a native speaker or qualified translator?*
    - *Did meeting materials include Metro's non-discrimination and language assistance and notice?*
    - *Did meeting materials include Metro's ADA notice?*
    - *Was material offered in alternative formats upon request? (e.g.-Braille, different languages, printed, etc.)*
- *Was the information tested for accuracy, plain language and clarity?*
- *Was written content tested using the inclusive style guide?*
- *Were people made aware of the availability of information through email, web or partner networks?*
- *Were opportunities to engage clearly posted on the project website or emailed to interested persons list one to two weeks prior to the events?*

- *Were people given advance notice of project briefings at community meetings?*
- *What type of news or media coverage did the project receive?*

Focus area 3: Involve underserved communities such as those with limited English proficiency, diverse cultural backgrounds, low-incomes, disabilities, seniors and youth.
This focus area includes activities related to engagement and communications tools and tactics that specifically seek to include people from underserved or vulnerable communities who may be impacted by Metro's work.

- *Was a demographic analysis of the program, project or service area completed to identify race, language proficiency, income levels?*
- *Was an analysis completed to determine an approach to providing language assistance? This includes written materials as well as live simultaneous interpretation.*
  - *Was a budget set aside to include these expenses?*
- *If language translation was determined essential to meeting engagement goals,*
  - *Was material translated and/or provided to communities that have a limited ability to speak English?*
  - *Were quality live interpretation services made available during the meeting?*
  - *Was a native speaker available to answer questions from participants?*
  - *How many comments were received in languages other than English?*
- *Were stipends, food, childcare assistance, technology access or other options offered to reduce barriers to participation?*
- *Were efforts made to build the capacity to engage with participants or community organizations? (Information sharing, trainings, partnerships).*
- *Was project information made available at accessible locations such as health care clinics, local and ethnic markets, community centers and schools?*
- *Were community organizations that serve low-income communities, communities of color, people with limited English proficiency, youth or persons with disabilities engaged? Were they offered materials to share with their networks using multiple formats?*
  - *Did they participate in co-creating the engagement strategies processes?*
  - *Were they compensated appropriately to support the engagement process?*
- *Did people feel their involvement was considered/acted upon? (included in focus area 1)*
- *Did participants express interest in staying involved with this project, or other Metro initiatives? (included in focus area 1)*