

Public Participation Plan CBO Engagement

Background:

MTC staff conducted a second round of public engagement as part of the 45-day public comment of the Draft 2023 MTC Public Participation Plan. Starting in early March 2023, MTC staff began planning discussion groups with leaders and staff from community-based organization who serve people with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities and persons who are unhoused or housing instable. The purpose of these discussions were to test the proposed engagement methods included in the Drat PPP — especially those aimed at engaging historically underrepresented and hard-to-reach populations.

Between March 20–29, staff conducted the following discussion groups via Zoom:

1. Spanish-speaking discussion group: **March 20, 2021**
 - a. Participant organizations: Arriba Juntos, El Tímpano, La Luz and UpValley Family Centers
2. Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking discussion group: **March 20, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Chinatown Community Development Center and Community Youth Center
3. Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking discussion group: **March 21, 2023**
 - a. Participant organization: Self Help for the Elderly
4. Persons with disabilities discussion group: **March 22, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Center for Independent Living, Community Resources for Independent Living and Lighthouse for the Blind
5. Unhoused/Housing unstable discussion group: **March 23, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency, Hamilton Families and Lao Family Community Development
6. Unhoused/Housing unstable discussion group: **March 29, 2023**
 - a. Participant organization: Brilliant Corners

Key Takeaways:

The discussion groups yielded robust discussions that outlined a variety of engagement methods to improve engagement with the represented communities. The following is an overview of comments received.

1. **Create and maintain relationships with community-based organizations.** Discussion group participants encouraged MTC staff to create ongoing relationships with community-based organizations and educate the staff and community members they serve on MTC's policies, practices and programs. They stressed the importance of regular communication with CBOs in order to gain trust and establish credibility. In turn, MTC would gain regular access to hard-to-reach populations, aiding MTC in the development of key policies and plans. For ongoing communications, CBOs could play the role of intermediary between MTC and a community as the CBOs are a trusted information source. Participants also recommended providing financial incentives, both to community organizations and community members. Finally, participants recommended making information applicable to the daily life or interests of the communities. By doing so, community members are more likely to provide relevant input.
2. **Go to where the people are.** Discussion group participants unanimously recommended that MTC conduct engagement at existing locations where people gather, including regular meetings at a community organization's site, street fairs or other community gatherings, laundromats, libraries, etc. Tabling at these locations would enable staff to provide printed information to the public, including boards, flyers and handouts, and to engage in policy discussions with interested participants. At community meetings, MTC staff could present information and request input. Discussion group participants recommended that a presenter speak plainly and clearly, make the content relevant and speak in-language if required. For community members who are unhoused or housing unstable, regular events where participants could receive information about needed services were recommended as good places to provide information and receive input. Finally, MTC staff should make sure to vary engagement locations and advertise events to bolster participation.

3. **Use small groups or focus groups to receive input on complex topics.** This tactic is especially effective for those with limited English proficiency, seniors with limited technology proficiency and/or internet access and those who are unhoused or housing unstable. Discussion group participants mentioned that small groups could provide MTC staff with the opportunity to explain complex information in detail and then have time to allow the small number of participants to ask clarifying questions. In addition to verbal input, short surveys were mentioned as another good way to receive input.
4. **Offer incentives to drive better attendance.** Discussion group participants indicated that offering a meal or snack is a great way to encourage attendance at in-person events. Cash, gas or transportation (Clipper) cards are other incentives that would encourage attendance (it was noted that youth prefer bus passes or coffee gift cards). Other inexpensive giveaways, such as grocery bags or mugs, would increase attendance as well.
5. **Use online engagement to reach persons with disabilities, youth and those who are unhoused or housing unstable.** Workshops or meetings held via Zoom are effective ways to reach those who are internet savvy and have difficulty attending meetings in person. For the blind and low vision population, email is an effective communication tool and Zoom works well if the online meeting's interactive elements are screen reader accessible. Online PowerPoint presentations work well for most, although blind and low vision participants require a detailed description of slide content as information is being presented. Staff must ensure that all PowerPoint presentations are screen reader accessible. Overall, online engagement has been shown to be a game changer for public engagement, and the discussion group participants noted that it can work well for certain groups.
6. **Promote, promote, promote.** Discussion group participants stressed the importance of promoting MTC events or activities in advance to increase participation. Community organizations can assist with this promotion via their own groups, including to an organization's social media channels (e.g., WeChat) and/or SMS messaging platforms (e.g., Zingle), emails with translations to an organization's network and flyers or handouts with translations distributed at a community organization's location. Additional promotional channels include postings on MTC's social media sites, information

promoted on local television and radio as well as local language television, radio, newspaper, flyers posted on transit vehicles and at stations or at popular community locations.

7. **For email and regular mail correspondence, use catchy, relevant email subject lines or make envelopes stand out.** In order to have correspondence read by an intended recipient, discussion group participants recommended a catchy email subject line. If sending regular mail, participants recommended stamping the envelope of regular mail with “Action is Required” or something similar. Other advice included only sending relevant or relatable information, sending information on an intermittent basis to prevent oversaturation and providing a timeline for response, if response is needed. Having a personal connection to the sending entity was also mentioned.