

# Best Practices for Community Engagement

As more communities begin to address energy siting and development, engaging community members in the decision-making process is important. Community engagement is crucial for the successful development of energy regulations and projects that balance community, business, and industry interests. Public participation builds trust, provides an opportunity to address concerns, and increases shared support for the regulations or project.

Local officials and energy developers seeking to engage with the community should consider these best practices:

## Create opportunities for engagement

Host public meetings and provide other opportunities for community members to share feedback during the development of regulations or as part of a project's permitting process. Public meetings are an opportunity for developers to share details about the project, discuss its benefits, and answer questions. Bringing community members into the planning process can help them feel like they are contributing to the project or regulations rather than having decisions made for them.

## Engage early and often

Initiate community engagement as early as possible in the planning process to build trust and facilitate the sharing and addressing of feedback and concerns. It is also important to maintain ongoing communication and opportunities for community input throughout the development of zoning regulations and project permitting processes.

## Allow opportunity for everyone to make their voice heard

Uphold the principles of fairness and respect by valuing diverse perspectives within the community and creating space for these views to be shared without fear of condescension or harassment. In addition, consider the broader community's views and best interests, rather than allowing decisions to be determined by a few select voices that express their views the loudest.

## Provide transparent and responsive communication

Share clear and concise information with the community about projects, including their potential benefits and impacts, in language that is easily understandable. Avoid technical jargon or complicated language, offering explanations for terms or concepts that may be unfamiliar to those without a background in renewable energy. Ensure that communication about the project is readily available to the public. When offered, listen to concerns and feedback from the community and respond in a timely and transparent manner. Addressing concerns and providing accurate information will alleviate fears and misunderstandings and foster trust between interested and affected parties.

## Recognize historical and cultural dynamics

Acknowledge and address dynamics that have contributed to inequities within communities. Consider the previous and future intergenerational impacts during decision making to ensure policies and decisions do not unjustly burden future generations.

## Sources

1 "Equity Pledge & Implementation Guidance for Renewable Energy Developers & Investors." Emerald Cities Collaborative, Just Transition PowerForce, September 2021, [emeraldcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PFEquityPledge.pdf](https://emeraldcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PFEquityPledge.pdf). Accessed April 2024.

2 Ibid.

3 Dewey, Amanda, and Emma Runge. "Leading with Equity: Recommendations for State Decision Makers, Utilities, and Regulators to Advance Energy Equity." American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, Feb. 7, 2023, [aceee.org/fact-sheet/2023/02/leading-equity-recommendations-state-decision-makers-utilities-and-regulators](https://aceee.org/fact-sheet/2023/02/leading-equity-recommendations-state-decision-makers-utilities-and-regulators). Accessed April 2024.



How to address energy siting and development may be different for each community, but in many cases, decision making is most responsive to community needs when carried out at the local level. Every community is unique, from population distribution to geography to natural resources to public reception. It is important to consider these factors and make decisions based on local context. When area residents are involved in the process, initiatives will be positioned for the greatest success.

