

Collecting and Making Sense of Community Engagement Data

This document is intended for state and local education agency staff who collect or work with community engagement data and outlines a three-phase process for effective and meaningful engagements: **Before**, **During**, and **After** community engagement. Each phase includes crucial steps to ensure effective and meaningful interactions with the community.

The following pages provide a breakdown of each phase and helpful resources along the way.

Where to start**

Those starting from scratch should begin with **Phase 1**.

Those needing tools for conducting planned community engagement should begin with **Phase 2**.

Those who already have qualitative data in hand should begin with **Phase 3**.



Phase 1

- Define engagement objectives
- Develop engagement questions
- Determine type of engagement
- Create and pilot engagement materials

Phase 2

- Determine recording strategy
- Use standardized protocols and notetaking templates

Phase 3

- Prepare data for analysis
- Familiarize yourself with the data
- Create an initial codebook
- Code and analyze data
- Identify and validate themes
- Share findings

**** Important Note:** While the resources are designed to be used flexibly, the foundational steps in Phase 1 set the stage for meaningful and successful community engagement in the later phases. Ensure that content in each phase has been covered for engagement efforts to be intentional, focused, and effective.

Phase 1: Before community engagement

This initial phase focuses on laying the groundwork for successful engagement. Careful planning and preparation are essential to ensure that engagement activities are targeted, effective, and respectful of the community's needs and expectations.



Define engagement objectives

Define what you hope to learn through community engagement.

Considerations

- What topic creates the need for engagement?
- Why is this an important topic?
- What is known about the topic?
- For whom is this topic relevant?
- How will you share what you learn with the community?



Develop engagement questions

Develop community engagement questions that are aligned with the purpose of community engagement sessions, answerable, actionable, and specific.

Resources

- [Evaluating Alignment Between Community Engagement Purpose and Session Questions](#)
- [Prioritizing Community Engagement Session Questions](#)



Determine type of engagement

Decide on the type of community engagement (e.g., interviews, focus groups, surveys, town halls, or a mix of different methods). Recruit the right people to answer the question. Identify trusted individuals or organizations to help recruit for engagement.

Resources

- [Interview, Focus Group, Observation, or Survey?](#)

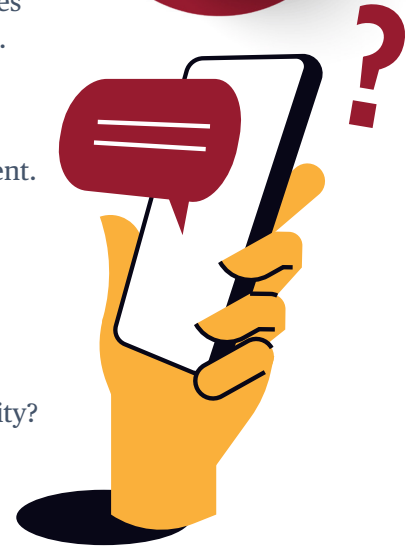


Create and pilot engagement materials

Create accessible, culturally responsive materials; pilot materials with a small group; and adjust as needed.

Resources

- [Guidelines for Interviews and Focus Groups](#)
- [Guidelines for Observations](#)





Phase 2: During community engagement

This phase involves actively engaging with the community through various activities and channels. The focus is on creating opportunities for dialogue, gathering feedback, and fostering a sense of shared ownership.



Determine recording strategy

Decide whether it makes sense to audio record the community engagement session or just take written notes.

Resources

- [Tips for Recording Community Engagement Sessions](#)



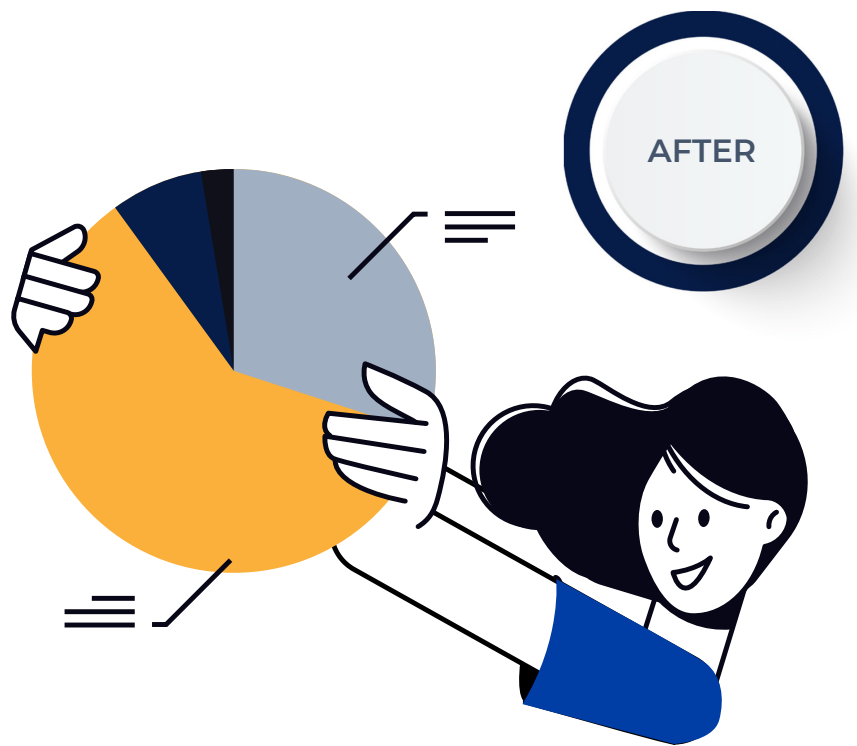
Use standardized protocols and notetaking templates

Use standardized templates and formats so all notes and transcripts are uniform, aiding comparison and analysis.

Resources

- [Tips and Tools for Facilitating Community Engagement Sessions](#)
- [Tips and Tools for Taking Notes During Community Engagement Sessions](#)





Phase 3: After community engagement

This final phase focuses on analyzing the feedback received, implementing changes based on that feedback, and reporting back to the community on the outcomes of the engagement process.



Prepare data for analysis

Keep data in encrypted or password-protected locations with restricted access. Remove personally identifiable information to protect privacy while supporting analysis.

Resources

- [Tips for Transcribing Community Engagement Session Data](#)
- [Tips for Anonymizing Community Engagement Session Data](#)



Familiarize yourself with the data

Read all transcripts and notes, taking notes in the margins about both codes you did expect and did not expect. Individually or as a team, determine and highlight which passages directly address your research question.



Create an initial codebook

Create a list of codes, each with a clear name. Individually or as a team, review your codes, looking for overlaps or redundancies that can be consolidated. Document your codes in a codebook, describing each code's meaning and application.

Resources

- [Generating a Codebook for Analyzing Community Engagement Session Data](#)



Code and analyze the data

Use your codebook to code notes and transcripts, either using an Excel template or qualitative coding software. Add, remove, or revise codes as new ones emerge, updating your previously coded data whenever you alter your codebook.

Resources

- [Using Excel for Coding and Analyzing Community Engagement Session Data](#)



Identify and validate themes

Take note of codes that appear together and codes that are unique to specific respondents (e.g., from a particular focus group). Check with other coders and relevant stakeholders to see if the themes you identify and take away from the data are accurate, complete, and culturally informed.

Resources

- [Tips for Generating Themes from Community Engagement Session Data](#)



Share findings

With the initial research question in mind, create tailored messages and dissemination strategies for different audiences, depending on who needs to hear these findings and the best way and time to share these findings with them.

Resources

- [Disseminating Community Engagement Session Findings](#)
- [Dissemination Approaches: Pros and Cons](#)
- [Tips and Tools for Visualizing Community Engagement Session Data](#)



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