Community Engagement Toolkit

Engagement is an essential component of building and sustaining vibrant communities, and you play a crucial role in fostering engagement among your fellow community members. This document provides a variety of templates and links to resource hubs to assist your efforts in successfully engaging your community members.

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Tips for Managing a Planning Board Subcommittee

- Identifying a lead or co-leads is helpful to ensure progress is kept on track and that meetings have structure. It is also useful when engaging with the public to have a central point of contact.
- Gather contact information:
  - This is the most critical element of your first meeting. Use the Sign-in Sheet to gather attendee contact information.
- Identify the overall goal(s) of your group.
- Code of Conduct: Ensure everyone understands the code of conduct for your meeting.
  - Some subcommittees will decide to use a formal meeting process to conduct their meetings and use Robert's Rules of Order. Others may be less formal. Check out this link for guidance on establishing rules & procedures that are both simple but effective for keeping order.
- Understand what project(s) you'll be working on and prioritize them.
- Determine the frequency of meetings that best suits subcommittee member needs. Adjust your meeting schedule as necessary.
- Recording Meeting Minutes:
  - Assign someone to take detailed meeting notes, including key discussion points, subcommittee members in attendance, attendees' input, and any decisions made.
- Use a sign-in sheet and meeting minutes to report back to the Planning Board; remember to keep the Board apprised of the subcommittee's progress. This can be accomplished through subcommittee reports and presentations to the PB at defined intervals (monthly, quarterly, etc.).
- Keep the community informed about progress, achievements, and upcoming meetings through your chosen communication channels.
- Sharing meeting notes, calendar reminders and other relevant information between meetings is a helpful way to keep subcommittee members informed and engaged.
- Regularly review your sign-in sheets to keep track of active subcommittee members and identify missing stakeholders. This will inform any additional outreach needed to get the best representation at your next meetings.

Community Meetings & Workshops: Step-by-Step

Step 1. Define meeting goals

What outcomes do you hope to achieve? Clearly state these outcomes, and include them on the agenda and in any advertisement of the meeting (see Steps 6 and 7).

Step 2. Identify key stakeholders

Who would be interested in or affected by your planning or implementation process? Identify these folks for targeted invitations.

- See Community Toolbox Chapter 7 Section 6: Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative
- See Community Toolbox Chapter 18 Section 3: Identifying Targets and Agents of Change: Who Can Benefit and Who Can Help

Step 3. Identify communication methods

Discuss what forms of communication are best for members of the subcommittee to stay in contact. Does everyone have email? should you use a Dropbox or Google Drive? Additionally, decide which platforms to publicize meetings and events on (Facebook, municipal website, etc.)

- Visit Chapters 6 and 7 of the Community Toolbox for more detailed guidance.

Step 4. Choose a date and time and invite attendees

This can be done through email, using Doodle, or other time polling tool. When proposing dates and times, avoid conflicts with major local meetings and events. When a date is chosen, send the date and time immediately out via email and/or calendar invitation. Alternatively, you may wish to partner with or attend a local event to generate interest from a specific group.

Step 5. Prepare meeting materials

Create an agenda and compile relevant information that will be discussed during the meeting. Identify what should be sent in advance of the meeting versus handed out at the meeting, for example: agendas, past minutes, and background materials would be helpful to send in advance. See page 5 for sample materials.

Step 6. Publicize the meeting

Develop promotional materials to create interest and inform residents about the meeting using information gathered in Step 3. Ensure critical information is included in your materials such as the meeting date, time, address of the location, and a point of contact for the subcommittee and for the Planning Board.

- Public meetings must follow the requirements of New Hampshire's Right-to-Know law, RSA 91-A. Visit the New Hampshire Municipal Association's website for a list of resources regarding RSA 91-A.

Step 7. Conducting the Meeting

Visit Chapter 4 Section 5 of the Community Toolbox; Making Community Presentations, for more in-depth guidance.

Sample Meeting Materials

The following list includes sample meeting materials developed by SRPC which may be of use, along with links to other existing materials and resources developed by engagement professionals.

Pre-meeting Checklist
- Be sure to identify any resources needed to conduct the meeting & assign a responsible party (projectors, markers, easels, etc.)

Agenda
- Your agenda should be detailed, and include time slots and speakers for each item. You should also include the purpose of the meeting and a list of materials if any are being provided. This helps maintain a structured and efficient flow during the meeting. Share the agenda with attendees before the meeting, if possible.
- To keep newcomers informed and ensure that the purpose of your meeting is in alignment, add your group's scope or mission to your agendas. For example, a group's scope may be to preserve the quality of the Town's natural resources, but the purpose of your meeting may be to generate interest in joining your group among other natural resource stewards in town.
- Visit University of Minnesota Extension's Community Development site for a comprehensive guide to developing an effective meeting agenda.

Facilitation Guide
- See the Local Civic Health Guide from New Hampshire Listens for guidance on facilitating meetings.

Explaining the Master Planning Process
- The Overview Presentation given by SRPC (Appendix) can be adapted to inform participants on the Master Plan update process.

Sign-in Sheet
- A sample sign-in sheet can be found in the Appendix.

Engagement Activities & Evaluation

- Decide which type of engagement activity might be best suited for the purpose of your meeting.
- See the Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement guide from the Federal Transit Authority for a comprehensive guide to choosing engagement techniques.
- See page 18 of the same document for meeting evaluation guidance.

Developing a Plan to Implement Action Items

Visit the Office of Planning and Development's Website for concise Informational Guides including An Overview of Master Planning and How to Implement the Master Plan.

- Discuss potential strategies for implementing the action items with attendees.
  - Refer to Chapter 8, Section 4 of the Community Toolbox; Developing Successful Strategies: Planning to Win for a more thorough description, checklist, tools, and examples.
- Discuss resources, skills, and connections that exist within your group. Assign responsibilities to subcommittee members and volunteers based on feedback.
- Consider the timeline for implementing your action items. It would be most useful to your subcommittee to set a clear and specific timeline with progress checkpoints to maintain momentum. Also be sure to set clear deadlines when assigning participants with a task.
- Visit the Office of Planning and Development's Website for Informational Guides on Master Planning and How to Implement the Master Plan.

Example Implementation Guide pages from the Strafford Master Plan.

See Appendix for the prioritization worksheet used to prioritize actions in the Strafford Master Plan.

Other Information & Resources

The Community Toolbox has just about every resource you could ever need from start to finish in the planning process. Visit the Community Toolbox website, a service of the Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas.

Other useful information can be found on the American Planning Association's Knowledge Center, including guides, tool kits, reports, case studies, model regulations, and much more. Visit the APA's Knowledge Center.

Sustainable Development Code compiles case studies, examples, and models of local regulations for planning sustainable communities. Search the Sustainable Development Code's library.

Visit UNH Extension's NH Citizen Planner Collaborative webpage to access planning training, materials, and resources.

Find Inclusive Public Engagement for Local Government on the Institute for Local Government's website.

Attend New Hampshire Municipal Association's Right-to-know Workshop on Meetings & Records by accessing the NHMA website.

Check out the Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit from Smart Growth America, which features multiple types of step-by-step resources and templates.

What Comes Next & Tips for Common Challenges

How to increase engagement in meetings

- Sometimes everyone has something to say and other times it's difficult to get people to share their thoughts and actively participate in meetings. By mixing up your tactics - using brainstorming sessions, breakout conversations and other discussion-based activities - you can can help people re-engage in the discussion.
- Find other tips for increasing engagement in:
  - New Hampshire Listens Local Civic Health Guide on Page 23.
  - Going Beyond the Usual Participants from the Institute for Local Government

Working with difficult people

- Remember, you are all working toward a common goal of improving your community. When faced with challenging personalities, try these techniques from the Management Training Institute.

Getting consensus or agreement

- Consensus building takes time. Even if the community agrees on a shared outcome, people might have different ideas on how to get there. See this guide to Consensus Based Decision-Making Processes from The Consensus Council, which can be found on their website.

Delegating tasks, shared action and accountability

- Add next steps to every agenda so that at the following meeting, you can begin by reviewing progress toward those steps.
- See this guide from Brandeis University on how to effectively delegate tasks.

Appendix

Master Planning Overview Presentation by SRPC

Sign-in Sheet

Action Feasibility Analysis & Scoring Worksheets

THE MASTER PLAN

- Tells a story about how a community became what it is today, and lays out a vision for what it would like to be in the future

- Guide for the overall character, physical form, growth, and development of a community

- Describes how, why, when and where the community should build, rebuild and preserve

- Displays information and research related to the Vision and Land Use (required) or other themes (optional) through text, images, maps, etc.

STRAFFORD
Regional Planning Commission

THE MASTER PLAN

- Illustrates the land use and development principles that guide public decisions

- Identifies implementable actions the Town can take to achieve the goals and vision of the Master Plan

- Gives legitimacy to projects and regulations that implement the Master Plan's vision
  - E.g. regulations that support the type of development the Town has prioritized, or that protect features the Town values.
  - Does <u>NOT</u> alter the normal process for approving capital projects or regulations

STRAFFORD
Regional Planning Commission

THE MASTER PLAN AND REGULATIONS

- Adoption of a Master Plan is a prerequisite to almost all subsequent regulations

  - Zoning ordinance, Site Plan Regulations, Subdivision Regulations

  - Master Plan is not applied directly to individual projects

  - Instead, the Planning Board is tasked with developing a set of regulations that reflects the values laid out in the Master Plan
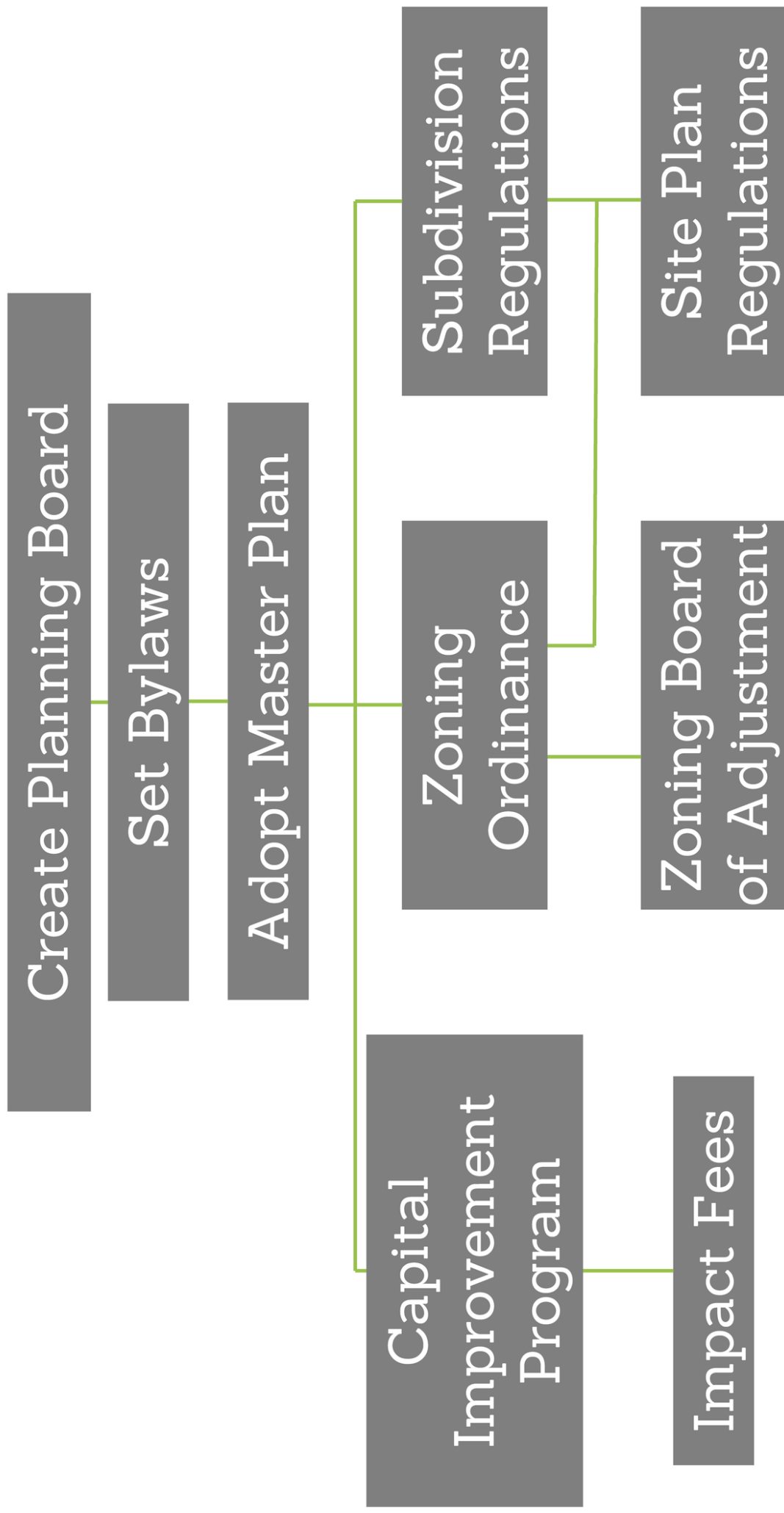
THE MASTER PLAN

Do think of the Plan as:

- The Town's vision
- A living dynamic document
- A guide for community growth
- A guide for capital investment
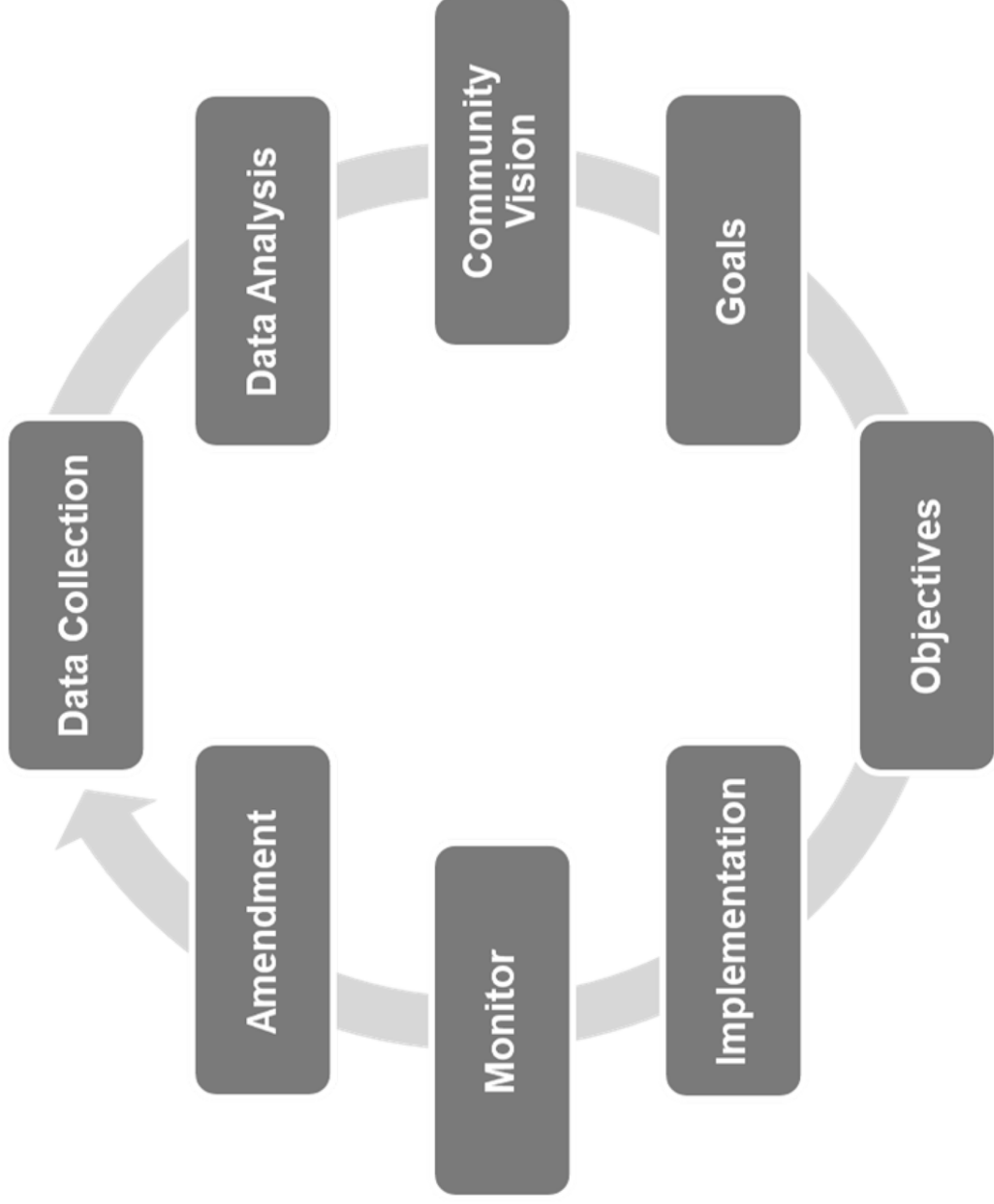
Don't Think of the Plan As:

- Regulations
- A static document
- Funding
- A burden

STRAFFORD Regional Planning Commission

PLACE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Create Planning Board

Set Bylaws

Adopt Master Plan

Subdivision Regulations

Site Plan Regulations

Zoning Ordinance

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Capital Improvement Program

Impact Fees

SIGN IN

Print Name	Community/ Organization	Phone/Email	Time spent reviewing materials	Is your attendance at this meeting paid for by a federal grant?
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N
				Y / N

Action Feasibility Analysis

Please evaluate each action item against the criteria in the leftmost table column by circling the icon that matches your response. Indicate in the notes column where criteria are not applicable or you are unsure how to respond. Indicate potential responsible parties in the box above the icon key.

insert action item here		NOTES	
Existing efforts toward action	✔ ✖		
Existing relationship to potential partners	✔ ✖		**Key**
Capital costs estimate	⌒ ⌒ ⌒		
Requires labor, volunteers, or technical assistance outside of the responsible parties	✔ ✖		✔ Yes
Consistent with existing policies and procedures	✔ ✖		✖ No
Impacts environmental or human health	➕ ➖		➕ Positive
Supports economic vibrancy	✔ ✖		➖ Negative
Requires ongoing maintenance or funding	✔ ✖		⌒ High
Involves engaging the wider community	✔ ✖		⌒ Medium
Mitigates hazard or builds resilience to climate impacts	✔ ✖		⌒ Low
Impacts vulnerable populations (youth, older adults, low-income)	➕ ➖		⏱ Short
Advances state, regional, or partner objectives	✔ ✖		⏱ Medium
Coordination level needed? (i.e., few or many partners?)	⌒ ⌒ ⌒		⏱ Long
Timeline?	⏱ ⏱ ⏱		

Action Feasibility Analysis Scoring Guide

The table below indicates point values for each potential response to the list of feasiblity metrics. It is suggested that scoring occur after the feasibility analysis to avoid biased responses. Once the feasibility of each action is scored, community members can prioritize actions with the highest point values. The higher the point value, the more feasible the action item.

Metrics	Point Values		
Existing efforts toward action	✔ 1	✖ 0	
Existing relationship to potential partners	✔ 1/partner	✖ 0	
Capital costs estimate	◠ 2	◠ 1	◠ 0
Requires labor, volunteers, or technical assistance outside of the responsible parties	✔ 0	✖ 1	
Consistent with existing policies and procedures	✔ 1	✖ 0	
Impacts environmental or human health	➕ 1	➖ -1	
Supports economic vibrancy	✔ 1	✖ -1	
Requires ongoing maintenance or funding	✔ 0	✖ 1	
Involves engaging the wider community	✔ 1	✖ 0	
Mitigates hazard or builds resilience to climate impacts	✔ 1	✖ 0	
Impacts vulnerable populations (youth, older adults, low-income)	➕ -1	➖ 1	
Advances state, regional, or partner objectives	✔ 1	✖ 0	
Coordination level needed? (i.e., few or many partners?)	◠ 2	◠ 1	◠ 0
Timeline?	⏱ 2	⏱ 1	⏱ 0

Key

✔	Yes
✖	No
➕	Positive
➖	Negative
◠	High
◠	Medium
◠	Low
⏱	Short
⏱	Medium
⏱	Long