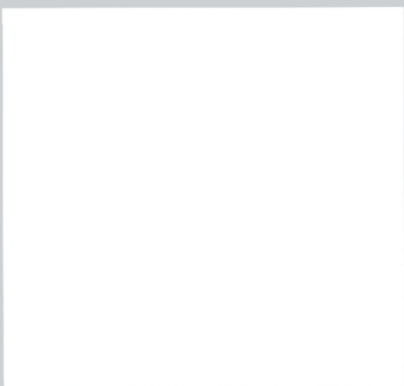
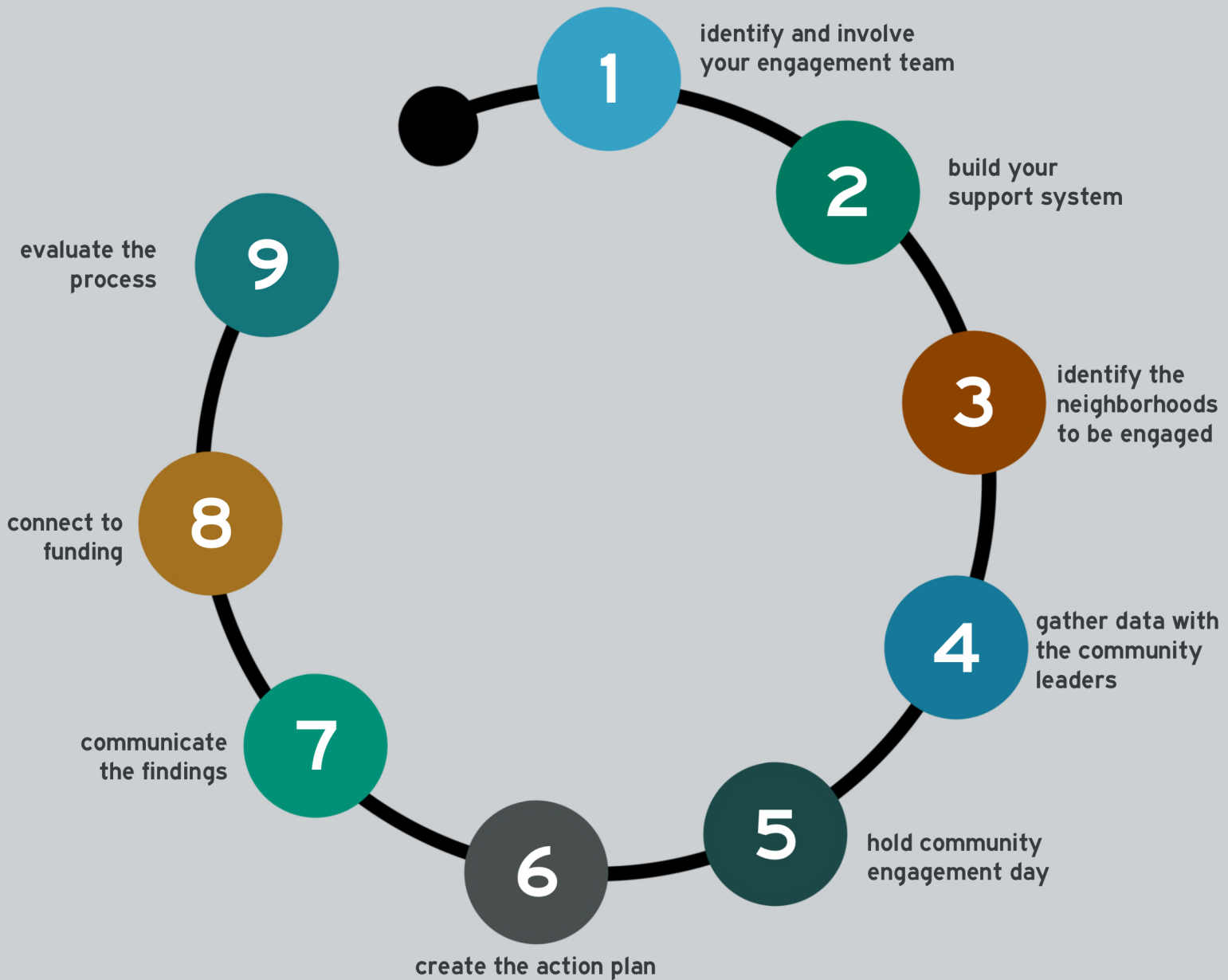


THE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



THE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



STEP 1

identify and involve your engagement team

What is an engagement team?

Someone has to provide a conduit for the change; the engagement team serves that role. Engagement team members:



- provide subject matter expertise
- develop plans for gaining community participation
- document the process

The engagement team must work well together but also bring others into the change.



At each step in the process, documentation is important. Many individuals and groups will benefit from an accurate record, including future engagement teams, the subject community, and the larger community of participation.



Your project group will need to develop a mechanism to communicate with each other and your greater community.



STEP 1

identify and involve
your engagement team

Your project team

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EXPERTISE

NOTES

STEP 2

build your support system

Community involvement is essential. The engagement team will need strong advocates for change within the community to help build relationships with the community. Finding people who recognize the potential for change and are connected in the community is critical.

Places to look for advocates:



- folks working in the education system
- transit professionals such as local transit providers
- youth programming leaders like the Boys and Girls Clubs
- folks working for or/and attending centers of faith
- public housing professionals

NOTES

STEP 3

identify the neighborhoods to be engaged

With your team leadership identified, you can begin to scope out the communities that are priorities for change.

Defining the communities to be engaged is critical to the work of the group. Knowing where to focus data gathering and relationship building will conserve the energy of the group to only those most important areas.

A good way to narrow your community choices is to perform a SWOT analysis for each considered community. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal to the community. Things to consider are the:



- people (volunteers, board members, elected officials)



- physical resources (buildings, equipment, transportation networks)



- financial (grants, funding agencies, other sources of income)



- activities and processes (programs or systems already in place)



- past experiences

STEP 3

identify the neighborhoods to be engaged

Opportunities and threats are usually external factors, things the community can not control, such as:



- funding decisions







- impact of regional or city planning process and decisions



- availability of partnerships

CONDUCT YOUR OWN SWOT ANALYSIS

 STRENGTHS _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	 WEAKNESSES _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
 OPPORTUNITIES _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	 THREATS _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

STEP 4

gather data with the community leaders

With your target area defined, it is time to collect data with your community leaders. At this point, determine your learning goals and how the data will be collected. Resist the urge to determine your teaching goals at this time. Focusing on what your group needs to know will provide better data (it is the focus) and stronger relationships (we are listening; people generally like to be heard). The point of this stage is to test the team's assumptions in the SWOT analysis and deepen our understanding of the community. It is time to collect ground-level data. There is no substitution for "street beating".

NOTES

STEP 5

hold community engagement day

Now, it is time to join ranks with the identified communities and jointly assess the area for change. Planning is very important for community events. Comfort and safety at the event rests with the team. Every effort should be made to demonstrate to the community that you are serious about the work. Being vigilant about safety and prepared for the situation are great ways to demonstrate your seriousness.

Things to consider bringing along:



- water



- shade canopy



- snack food



- sunscreen



- first aid kit



- data collection tools (such as maps, clipboards, and pencils)



- retroreflective vests

STEP 6

create the action plan

During community engagement day(s), a lot of information on existing conditions and improvement needs will be collected. The next step is to do the thought work needed to organize and synthesize that information into a document that can be shared and can guide the improvements – change – sought by the community.

At this point, issues that were identified by members of the community and the engagement team during the community engagement day should translate into action items in the form of recommended infrastructure improvements. These improvements can range from performing simple maintenance activities to construction of new facilities.

NOTES

STEP 7

communicate the findings

The list of improvements created in the previous step now needs to be turned into cohesive products that can be used to communicate the findings. Those findings include what was found (documentation of existing conditions) and what is needed (recommendations for improvements).

The team should develop a report that describes the steps leading up to the walkaround (such as the purpose and scope of the study and members of the team), observations made during the walkaround, and the list of recommendations that address needs identified during community engagement day. Pictures of existing conditions and graphics that show the recommended improvements are an essential part of the report.

The report can be shared with:



- community leaders



- elected officials



- city engineers



- planners, etc.

Community leaders could also speak about the report at a City Council meeting or other community event.

STEP 8

connect to funding

Funding will be needed to see the recommended improvements come to fruition. It all takes money! The good news is that some of the recommendations may be so low-cost (such as installing a new sign or restriping an existing crosswalk) that they can be absorbed into the locality's regular maintenance activities. However, some improvements desired by the community may cost much more (such as constructing new sidewalks).

Community leaders and local officials can work together to identify funding opportunities, such as specific federal or state grant programs. Resources may include the Alabama Transportation Assistance Program at Auburn University, the Alabama Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the local transit system, etc.

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