

Community Engagement Plan Template

Title VI–Compliant | Vermont Environmental Justice Law–Aligned

SECTION 1. PURPOSE, AUTHORITY & CORE COMMITMENTS

(Core Principles 1, 2, 10)

1.1 Purpose of This Plan

What to write here:

Briefly explain *why* engagement is being done and what this plan governs.

Template language:

This Community Engagement Plan describes how [Agency/District Name] will design and carry out meaningful, inclusive, and non-discriminatory public participation for [project/program name]. The plan applies to all engagement activities related to planning, implementation, and evaluation of this work.

1.2 Legal & Policy Authority

Required language (adapt as needed):

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Vermont Environmental Justice Law (3 V.S.A. §6001–6007)
- Vermont Core Principles of Community Engagement
- EPA / DOJ Title VI Guidance
- Act 154 public participation expectations

This plan is intended to ensure compliance with Title VI and to provide meaningful participation opportunities, with particular attention to Environmental Justice Focus Populations.

1.3 Core Engagement Commitments

What to do: Select or adapt 3–5 commitments your agency/district will actually uphold.

Examples:

- Community members are treated as experts in their lived experience
- Engagement occurs early and throughout decision-making
- Barriers to participation are proactively addressed
- Feedback will be documented and responded to

- Engagement will not be rushed to meet internal deadlines

SECTION 2. PROJECT OVERVIEW & DECISION CONTEXT

(Core Principles 2, 10)

2.1 Project Summary

Prompt: Describe the project in plain language.

- Project name:
- Sponsoring agency/district:
- Funding source(s):
- Geographic area affected:
- Duration:

2.2 Decisions Being Informed

Critical for transparency.

Prompt: What decisions can community input influence?

Examples:

- Program design
- Eligibility criteria
- Prioritization of funding
- Implementation approach
- Timing or phasing

2.3 Decisions Not on the Table

Required to avoid false expectations. Examples:

- Statutory requirements
- Budget caps
- Federal mandates
- Fixed timelines

SECTION 3. COMMUNITY CONTEXT & HISTORICAL GROUNDING

(Core Principles 6, 8)

3.1 Communities Affected

Prompt: Identify who may experience benefits or burdens. Include:

- Towns, neighborhoods, watersheds
- Farmers, renters, landowners, workers
- Environmental Justice Focus Populations (per 3 V.S.A. §6002)

3.2 Demographic & Access Considerations

Check all that apply and explain briefly:

- ☐ Limited English Proficiency
- ☐ Low income
- ☐ Disability or accessibility needs
- ☐ Transportation barriers
- ☐ Limited internet access

3.3 History of Engagement

Prompt:

What has already happened here?

Examples:

- Prior meetings, surveys, or reports
- Known community frustration or distrust
- Past promises not fulfilled
- Lessons learned and changes planned

SECTION 4. ENGAGEMENT GOALS & LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION

(Core Principles 2, 11)

4.1 Engagement Goals

Prompt: What should engagement accomplish? Examples:

- Identify barriers communities face
- Improve program usability
- Avoid unintended harms

- Build long-term trust

4.2 Level(s) of Engagement

Select and explain:

Level	How it will be used
Inform	What info will be shared
Consult	What feedback is sought
Involve	How community shapes process
Collaborate	Where co-creation happens
Empower	Any delegated authority

SECTION 5. STAKEHOLDER & RELATIONSHIP MAPPING

(Core Principles 4, 5, 6)

5.1 Stakeholder Groups

Prompt: List groups and why they matter.

- Communities most impacted
- Community-based organizations
- Municipal boards
- Tribal or Indigenous partners
- Advocacy or service organizations

5.2 Relationship Strategy

Prompt: How will relationships be built and maintained?

Include:

- Existing trusted partners
- New relationships needed
- Assigned staff relationship holders
- Continuity plan for staff turnover

SECTION 6. ENGAGEMENT DESIGN: MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

(Core Principles 7, 8, 9)

6.1 Engagement Methods

Prompt: Select methods appropriate to the community.

Examples:

- Listening sessions
- Tabling at existing events
- One-on-one technical assistance
- Paper surveys
- Community-led meetings

6.2 Location, Timing & Format

Prompt: Explain how choices reduce barriers.

Include:

- Why locations were chosen
- Evening/weekend options
- Transportation access
- Familiar or trusted spaces

SECTION 7. ACCESSIBILITY & LANGUAGE ACCESS (TITLE VI CORE)

(Core Principles 6, 9)

7.1 Language Access

Required details:

- Languages identified
- What materials are translated
- Interpretation availability
- How to request services (free of cost)

7.2 Accessibility

Prompt: How will participation be accessible?

Examples:

- ADA-accessible locations

- Large-print materials
- ASL or CART
- Sensory-friendly settings

SECTION 8. COMPENSATION & VALUING COMMUNITY EXPERTISE

(Core Principle 12)

8.1 When Compensation Is Provided

Prompt: Identify non-civic participation that merits compensation.

Examples:

- Advisory roles
- Focus groups
- Community liaisons
- Co-design sessions

8.2 Compensation Methods

- ☐ Stipends
- ☐ Honoraria
- ☐ Contracts
- ☐ Grants or sponsorships

SECTION 9. INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY & PUBLIC REPOSITORY

(Core Principles 1, 10)

9.1 Information Access

Prompt: Where can the public find information?

- Physical locations
- Website or online repository
- Materials available before and after engagement

SECTION 10. FEEDBACK COLLECTION & INTEGRATION

(Core Principles 2, 10)

10.1 How Input Is Collected

Examples:

- Written comments
- Facilitated discussion notes
- Oral feedback
- Visual tools

10.2 How Input Is Used

Prompt: Describe the internal process.

- Who reviews input
- How it informs decisions
- How tradeoffs are documented

10.3 Closing the Loop

Required:

Explain how results will be shared back to participants.

SECTION 11. TIME, CAPACITY & INTERNAL READINESS

(Core Principles 3, 11)

11.1 Staffing & Training

- Engagement lead
- Supporting staff
- Training needs

11.2 Timeline Adequacy

Prompt: Confirm timelines allow for real engagement, not rushed outreach.

SECTION 12. EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

(Core Principles 5, 10)

12.1 Success Indicators

Examples:

- Diversity of participants

- Reduced barriers
- Evidence of influence
- Community trust indicators

12.2 Review & Updates

- Review frequency
- How improvements are made
- Public reporting commitments

SECTION 13. CONTINGENCY & ADAPTATION

(Core Principles 7, 11)

Prompt: How will the agency adapt if:

- Attendance is low
- Emergencies occur
- Barriers emerge mid-process

SECTION 14. APPENDICES (AS NEEDED)

- Outreach materials
- Language access notices
- Compensation policies
- Feedback tools
- Title VI complaint procedures