

# SUSTAINABLE URBAN SYSTEMS

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND EQUITY INTO  
GROWING MEGAPOLITAN REGIONS BY  
GREENING THE URBAN HUMAN-NATURAL  
SYSTEM



**Equitable and inclusive  
approaches to engage  
community - a proposed  
scope of work**

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Metropolitan Center for  
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WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION



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*Community meetings need to involve many and diverse voices.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline a general framework that could be useful in guiding outreach and engagement associated with research efforts, with a specific focus on engaging underserved communities in a manner that is inclusive and equitable. The framework could be used to inform how community engagement associated with solicitations for research or requests for proposals (RFPs), might occur. This work is the outcome of a conference workshop and subsequent conversations by a broad group of individuals with expertise in research, education, University Extension, and community engagement. All too often, engagement or broader impacts associated with research projects tend to be a hasty and last minute ingredient to a proposal, and not a fully integrated component of the proposed study. Traditional engagement typically resembles a one-way street in terms of information exchange - from researcher to community, leaving limited room for community to inform the study or project outcomes. A new model of partnership and engagement is the product that this framework seeks to support. There is a critical need for more research to create the framework from which new engagement models are likely to emerge.



**Ensure that  
education is  
two-way:  
both  
community  
and  
researchers  
are learning  
from each  
other.**

You have  
hand &  
to work

with the

GrassTops

to get to the

GrassRoots



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## KEY INGREDIENTS FOR EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

### Front end engagement:

- Need to define who comprises the community/audience and how to authentically engage them in time and place.
- Need to co-create the research questions with community
- Need to define the time period/temporal component

### Continuing engagement (iterative scoping):

- Communicate initial findings, rescope application
- Ensure open channels of communication and engagement
- Ensure that education is two-way: both community and researchers are learning from each other, which is possible through active roles for community in research, data collection, and analysis.

### Post-project outreach:

- Ensure that research findings are communicated to the community
- Ensure that there is a sustainable exit strategy



#### FRONT END

Who is the audience or community to engage?



#### CONTINUING

How do we ensure that engagement is two-way?



#### POST-PROJECT

How do we ensure that efforts are on-going?

## IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### **Overall Goals and pre-project planning**

- Engagement for the sake of engagement isn't the goal. Objective(s) need to be laid out early and clearly. Ensure that you are working towards those objectives but be flexible to adapt those objectives based on community feedback.
- Ensure that community leaders are identified early.
- Know what it takes to get people to show up: financial incentives, food, etc.
  - ◆ We often send the wrong message when asking people to show up on our schedules or our agendas while we are being paid to be there and they are either missing work or having to pay for childcare to be there.
  - ◆ How do we send them the right message? - join their meeting, go to them, work on their schedule
- Education/outreach efforts have to be conscious of the network being tapped into.
- Leverage the outcomes (potential) of the project to incentivize early engagement. Projects should be disproportionately beneficial to the communities being engaged. Communicate this to leaders from the outset.
- Outsource the community engagement to those that are experts (community-based organizations, University Extension).
- Build into the grant/project for funds to go to those community-based organizations (CBO). This can be used as a tool to get funds into the communities themselves to participate.

### **Engagement during project lifetime**

- Ensure that one is mindful of who the audience is.
- Employ Games: Create a story about a future with mapping exercises. Play shadow-government games. For example, game out of how far one's food comes from, which can help recognize the rural urban connection.
- Identify incentives for the community as a whole. Leaders will recognize that and opt in.

- Ensure that you are sending the right message and that you are creating the right environment that shows people they are valued.
- Revise meeting or project agendas with feedback from the community.
- Ensure messages get out on time and in the right language.
- Practice deliberative democracy.

- Using culturally appropriate language is important.

- Engagement takes time. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

- Audience for outreach should be the nodes of the social network, not the whole community.

Nodes typically classified as:

- ◆ Connectors, Mavens, Salespeople
- ◆ Paid community liaisons
- ◆ Community based organizations

- Be careful not to extract more from the community than you are putting into it.
- Sustaining investments need to be made to perpetuate the capacity/expertise beyond the project. (while engaging)
- Deploy train the trainer programs, grass tops to get to grass roots.
- Constantly cultivate more leaders with the goal to build capacity in the community.

- ◆ Accessible Green spaces are opportunities to build engagement.

Leverage all the connections that need to be cultivated to create the



*Sudha Nanadagopal, an environmental justice advocate, provided an inspiring keynote address on community centered solutions.*

capacity for solving other problems. But! Needs to address fear of green gentrification and protect against it.

- ◆ Gold standard: the people that engage in the planning process need to be around to enjoy it!
- Leave with added capacity, partnerships, etc. that create sustainable systems (legacy).
- Deliberate and have a plan to “leave” the community as gracefully as entering it.

### **Youth engagement**

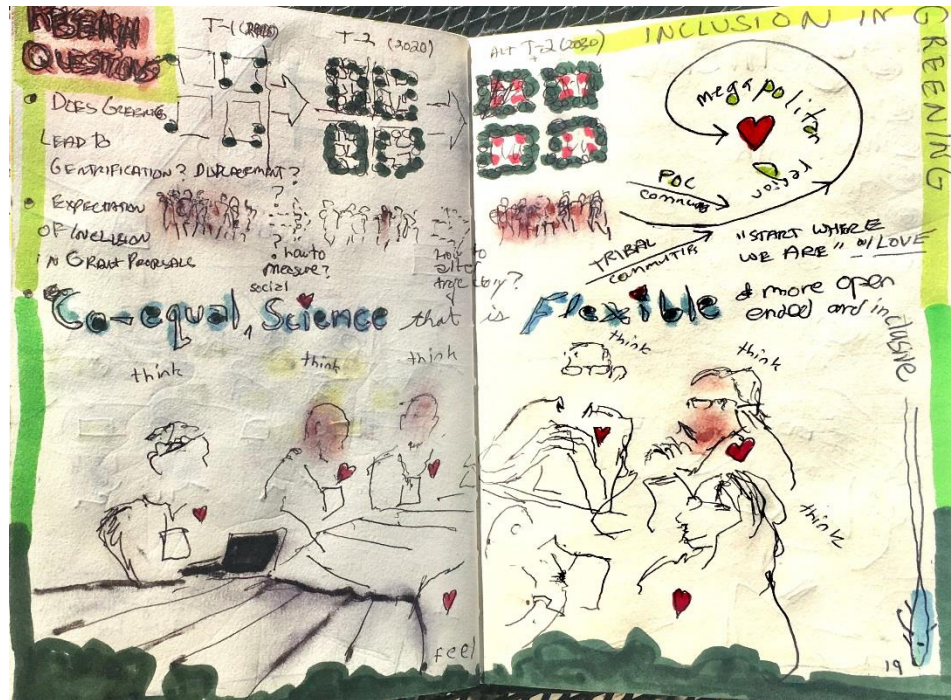
- Underserved communities are often those missing from the table, especially the youth in those communities.
- Cultivating youth as leaders. As policy makers, translators, ambassadors. Focusing on youth addresses many of the barriers simultaneously.
- Continued engagement- youth commissioners as liaisons.
- Virtuous cycle of strengthening nature-culture connection through youth, builds capacity, fuels future commitment that is community-centered, leads to better science, and healthier communities.
- Develop policy advocacy internships for youth to participate in city councils, etc.

## **A SUGGESTED SCOPE OF WORK**

- **Part I:** Build the network - [Researchers need training/help. This is where the planning budget goes and could build on Extension as conduit to community and / or other CBOs]
- The first step in developing a new model for engagement is testing several strategies for engagement within a network comprising community and researchers. The composition of this network will be arrived at by adopting the following steps:
  1. Define the boundaries (City, multi-city/megapolitan, regional, watershed)
  2. Inventory the communities needing to be engaged (people of color, lower income, suburban homeowners, renters)



3. Identify the “grass tops” or “network nodes” (mavens, connectors, salespeople) that can help amplify communication between researcher/Extension and community
4. Train the trainers (scientists/researchers) on culturally appropriate language and techniques to engage with community
  - a. Learn strategies on framing and messaging
  - b. Learn about cultural sensitivity and competency



Participants worked together during the workshop to develop the scope of work. Artist John Barney was part of this working group.

- **Part II:** Define the scope/shared research objectives (research community) & capacity building objectives (non-research community)
  1. Convene community grass tops and researchers led by a facilitator with the message from science community guided by trained science communicators.
  2. Ensure a means to facilitate a two-way sharing of information – between scientific team and community.
  3. Co-produce the research objectives & capacity building objectives
    - a. Iterative, adaptive, not one and done [within the constraints of the grant]

## EXAMPLE BUDGET (\$50,000 - DIRECT COSTS ONLY)

- Training of academic personnel for community engagement/facilitation - \$15,000
- Developing engagement plan - \$5,000
- Community compensation - \$15,000
- Convening/meeting [include food/childcare] - \$5,000
- Stipends/Travel - \$10,000

## TIMELINE (20 MONTHS)

- Training the science team - science communication/cultural competency [2 months.]
  - ◆ Framing and messaging
  - ◆ Sensitivity
- Building trust [8 months.]
  - ◆ Go to the community
  - ◆ Iterative scoping
  - ◆ Outsource / tap into existing networks
- Workshop [10 months]
- Development of proposal that is based on shared research and community objectives.

## NEXT STEPS

Active consultations with foundations, funding agencies, and entities that seek to implement lasting change in communities of color on how to frame possible calls for proposals that incorporate the ideas listed in this document.

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