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- Staff time, knowledge, and other expertise necessary to conduct outreach and education
 - Communication tools available
 - Process to ensure efforts are transparent, accessible, and fun
 - Methods available to capture and record dialogue at outreach events
 - Variety of meeting spaces
 - Methods to continue engagement after the initial process has been completed

Some helpful tools in outreach include:

Oversight Responsibility

Assigning a staff member to oversee and be responsible for the engagement and outreach process will ensure dedicated attention to this important procedural step.

Advisory Committee or Board

Establishing a **diverse advisory board or committee** comprised of experts and community members can be helpful throughout the general plan update process. An advisory body can provide insight as to how to reach multiple populations, address potentially controversial issues, understand sensitive community needs, and represent a greater portion of the community. Establishment of the advisory body early in the process allows the board to inform the general outreach strategy from the beginning. An advisory board can also establish what community engagement will include for its own jurisdiction, and how community and stakeholder input is handled and communicated back to the public. Additionally, an advisory body can help build community capacity on issues such as data use and evaluation, as well as the historical context of land use planning. A manageably sized advisory body – around 10 people with an effective facilitator – should include multiple voices from the community and represent its diversity. General plan advisory board members should be drawn from the broad range of communities that exist within a jurisdiction to represent the varied interests that the public engagement process hopes to capture and to inclusively inform and enhance the general outreach strategy.

The following categories of advisory body members should be considered:

- Business leaders and/or representatives from chambers of commerce
- Representatives from the technology sector
- Local agency leaders, including water agencies, fire departments, law enforcement, parks and recreation, health officers, public works leads, and others
- Community development leaders
- Health leaders
- Representatives and advocates from various income groups, special needs populations, and neighborhoods in the jurisdiction

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- Multi–lingual representatives
 - State and/or federal agency leaders, if the jurisdiction has a high proportion of public lands
 - School representatives
 - Faith–based community representatives
 - Agriculture and food system representatives
 - Environmental justice representatives
 - Academics
 - Local philanthropic organizations
 - Individual community leaders

Survey of Overlapping Efforts

Multiple public engagement processes may be in progress simultaneously. For instance, outreach to solicit input on an application for grant funding may occur at the same time as outreach for an update of the general plan. Concurrent outreach processes can confuse participants; and this confusion poses a potential challenge for recruitment and involvement. Additionally, other public or private agencies – for example, departments of parks and recreation, hospitals, departments of public health, or non–governmental organizations – may be conducting outreach simultaneously. Increased awareness of ongoing efforts to gain input can help avoid overlapping or conflicting outreach efforts and might even allow outreach sessions to be combined.

Scale

Outreach for a county’s general plan is a much larger undertaking than for a city’s due to the broader catchment area. Stakeholders may also have less of a perceived stake in the process because county general planning is further removed from their local jurisdiction. Sharing how information will be incorporated into the planning process can relate the importance of participation and increase community input.

Partnership

All affected stakeholders should be represented in any public participation process. In a general plan process, this is the entire community. Partnership with various stakeholders also provides the opportunity to establish paid or unpaid volunteers to work within the community during the outreach process. Stakeholder groups in the general plan process may include:

- Community and neighborhood groups
- School districts, charter schools, and county offices of education
- County transportation commissions
- Utilities and public service providers of:
 - » Energy