

November 29, 2024

Attn: Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, 1650 Pennsylvania Ave. NW,
Washington, DC 20504

RE: DRAFT TOOLKIT: Broadening Public Participation and Community Engagement with the Federal Government

As the bipartisan, national membership association representing state and local health and human services agencies, the American Public Human Services Association (APHSA) welcomes the opportunity to share insights on how Federal agencies can better support public participation and community engagement. APHSA's members are experts in administering, overseeing, and aligning programs that build resilience and bolster wellbeing through access to food, health care, housing, employment, child care, community supports, and other key building blocks. Our members are also leading experts in engaging communities and people with lived experience in decision-making.

In our response to this feedback request, APHSA draws on insights from member engagement and APHSA-led initiatives to elevate the priorities of and promising practices discovered through state and local practitioners and policymakers. APHSA's responses to these questions most directly draw from previous and ongoing initiatives and lessons learned on fostering community engagement.

1. Which proposed content do you consider to be most or least helpful to Federal agencies for their participation and engagement activities?

In our experience, public agencies universally struggle to develop fair compensation models for community engagement. Information about compensation resources, especially those specific to how governments can legally compensate participation, will be the most helpful. OMB should consider adding a 2023 Annie E. Casey Foundation and Casey Family Programs publication, [Equitable Compensation Taskforce Report](#), which offers guidance on how to pay people with lived experience and community residents, to the toolkit.

2. What other types of content could help agencies begin or improve outreach and engagement?

Agencies looking to enhance outreach and engagement could benefit from resources focused on recruiting and building community advisory councils. Nava has developed a suite of tools to

support these efforts, including a guide on [How to Build a Participant Advisory Council](#). Additional materials in this suite include fliers for recruitment and setting expectations with agency staff, social media content with images, SMS text message templates, recruitment emails, and interest forms for potential participants. These resources provide a framework for fostering meaningful engagement and ensuring that community voices are effectively integrated into agency work.

Agencies will also find guidance on mobilizing partner organizations to deepen public participation and community engagement (PPCE) highly valuable. Partner organizations can play a pivotal role in extending outreach and providing staff training. For participatory research, resources like Code for America's [Letting the Community Lead](#) offer practical insights for involving communities in meaningful ways. These materials can help agencies establish strong partnerships and adopt community-driven approaches in their programs.

Finally, engaging young people in outreach and evaluation as a special population is another area where agencies need guidance on how to best expand their efforts. The Hello Insight guide, [We Know Us: Guide to Participatory Meaning Making with Young People](#), offers actionable advice for participatory research created by youth. For broader approaches, Kim Sabo Flores's book [Youth Participatory Evaluation: Strategies for Engaging Young People](#) provides strategies for youth involvement in evaluation. Similarly, the chapter *Youth Participation in Evaluation: Lessons from the Past, Opportunities for the Future*, in *Measure, Use, Improve!* ([available here](#)), outlines preparatory steps for youth engagement that parallel broader outreach strategies.

3. What other types of content could help the public better participate in engagement activities with Federal agencies?

Federal agencies could enhance public participation by sharing clear and accessible information on how to get involved through platforms that the public frequently uses, such as social media and text messaging. This approach allows agencies to reach diverse populations. For example, agencies can create step-by-step guides, FAQs, or brief instructional videos explaining how to participate in advisory councils, public comment periods, or community workshops. Leveraging text or app-based notifications can also help keep participants informed of upcoming opportunities, making it easier for them to stay engaged and contribute to the process.

4. How might you like to be involved in creating this Toolkit?

With expertise in public sector process innovation, technology, and human-centered design, APHSA's Process Innovation team is well-equipped to support the development, review, and dissemination of this toolkit. The team's experience in process change, technical assistance, and peer learning makes them uniquely positioned to evaluate the toolkit's usability and impact.



APHS A is also prepared to amplify the toolkit’s reach through platforms like the [Digital Government Hub](#), a curated library for health and human services practitioners. We can also leverage other channels, such as peer learning networks and professional affinity groups to ensure the toolkit reaches its intended audience and is implemented effectively.

For questions or to discuss further, contact Jess Maneely, Assistant Director of Process Innovation at jmaneely@aphsa.org.

