



Joint Boards of Directors STUDY SESSION

Joint Study Session of
Valley Metro RPTA and Valley Metro Rail
Boards of Directors

Date:
August 28, 2025

Starting Time
11:15 a.m.

Location:
Valley Metro
Lake Powell Conference Room (10A)/Webex
101 N. 1st Avenue, 10th Floor
Phoenix

**If you require assistance accessing the meetings on the
10th floor, please go to the 14th floor or call 602.262.7433.**



Study Session Notice & Agenda

August 21, 2025

**Joint Study Session Agenda
Valley Metro RPTA and Valley Metro Rail
Thursday, August 28, 2025
Board room/Webex
101 N. 1st Avenue, 10th Floor
11:15 a.m.**

Study sessions provide a less formal setting for the Boards of Directors to discuss specific topics, at length, with each other and Valley Metro staff members. Study sessions provide an opportunity for staff to receive input from the Boards and for the public to observe the discussions. Public comment will not be sought at this session. Staff may be directed to bring back matters to the Boards for future consideration, but no action will be taken at the Study Session.

At the request of the Boards of Directors, this study session will provide an overview of the Valley Metro Community Engagement Framework.

1. [Community Engagement Framework](#)

Qualified sign language interpreters are available with 72 hours notice. Materials in alternative formats (large print, audiocassette, or computer diskette) are available upon request. For further information, please call Valley Metro at 602-262-7433 or TTY at 602-251-2039. To attend this meeting via teleconference, contact the receptionist at 602-262-7433 for the dial-in-information. The supporting information for this agenda can be found on our web site at www.valleymetro.org.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Framework



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Welcome to
Plaza 19



OVERARCHING
Philosophy



Customer Experience and Stakeholder Collaboration are centerpieces in the agency's Five-Year Strategic Plan.

We believe public engagement and conversation is essential to the development of an effective, high performing and community-building transit system. Through open communication, inclusive engagement and collaborative, transparent planning with diverse stakeholders, we build a strong regional transit future.

Our goal is to further embed community engagement and feedback into our projects and programs and increase opportunities for meaningful engagement across our broad spectrum of riders, residents, employers, neighbors, community partners and the general public. We seek to meet our customers where they are through comprehensive, innovative and inclusive community engagement principles and practices. These practices evolve and adapt to the unique characteristics of each community and program, adapt to the changing needs of our communities and employ best practices within our industry.

We participate in public engagement across a comprehensive range of projects and programs to develop broad support for transit investments and ensure those investments acknowledge the needs

and priorities of our stakeholders and communities. Large-scale capital projects require engagement over a span of years, from planning and design through construction. We strive to adapt our engagement strategy at critical milestones and tier our support and strategy, from dedicated support for those directly impacted to messaging and education for the broader community. Throughout, and at varying levels, we highlight the wide-range of benefits from transit investments—beautified and activated streetscapes, pedestrian and safety infrastructure, economic development and increased connectivity across our growing region.

This community engagement framework has multiple roles. It explains our core values and principles—our promise to the communities we serve. It also provides a working model to develop robust, comprehensive engagement plans that can be used by all departments, projects and programs within Valley Metro to build tailored community engagement plans that springboard from a consistent set of principles, values and strategies.

At Valley Metro, our culture is community. We are both a partner and service provider to our 19 stakeholder agencies and jurisdictions. Working with our city partners and third-party contractors chosen to strategically enhance and expand our capacities, Valley Metro commits to effectively deploying our team and engagement philosophy to incorporate the community's vision across critical areas, including:

- Capital program development
- Service planning (short and long-term)
- Safety & security measures
- Fares and customer experience initiatives
- New technologies & innovations
- Outreach & communication methods



CORE VALUES
& Principles

Inclusive

- Exhaustively, persistently pursue open conversations with those affected by a process or decision.
- Seek the broadest possible coalition of riders, stakeholders, businesses, residents, community leaders and organizations to weigh in.
- Meet our customers and riders where they are and execute and innovate tactics to reach hard-to-reach markets.

Accessible

- Be present in our community to welcome and hear feedback from a broad cross-section of our community and ridership base.
- Continually pursue ways to facilitate dialogue, share information and garner input across customers and riders of all backgrounds and abilities.
- Welcome customers of all languages, ages and backgrounds through inclusive materials and a representative community engagement team.
- Balance in-person engagement strategies with technology-based solutions.

Transparent

- Clearly and candidly explain projects and processes and the important role stakeholders play in their development.
- Thoroughly outline the factors that will determine the shape of the project or initiative and how/when customers can engage.
- Explain and show how community input influenced project or program outcomes
- Seek greater and more frequent touchpoints to share program changes, challenges and opportunities with the immediate and broader community.

Relationship Centered

- Build and strengthen relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) and other trusted voices.
- Build trusted relationships through presence and availability, prompt and regular engagement and response and acknowledging what we know and don't yet know.
- Be immersive in the community to understand said and unsaid dynamics and tailor our engagement approach accordingly.
- Explain how stakeholder input and preferences shape decisions and stay committed to follow-through.

Representative

- Continually adapt and innovate to ensure our engagement conversation reflects the diversity of our customer and ridership base.
- Ensure our team is reflective of the local community or project area, providing a welcoming and familiar face in our outreach.
- Engage across the broadest cross-section of the community, ensuring feedback is representative of all points of view.

Our Engagement Commitments:

- Customer first
- Far & wide-reaching
- Proactive
- Collaborative
- Active listening & learning
- Open & transparent
- Dedicated presence



Key Considerations

It is through this framework and key considerations that community engagement will drive impact and change across the current and future Valley Metro system.

Following our overarching philosophy and core values, community engagement is fundamental to projects, programs and/or initiatives that affect the public and, thereby, they should have the strongest voice to influence decision-making and future direction.

- We will deploy a comprehensive and multi-prong set of engagement strategies to connect with our wide-ranging audiences.
- We will leverage all tools in the engagement toolbox, adding new, and editing traditional to remain connected, effective and achieving meaningful engagement.
- We will deploy where our customers are, across the system, at community gathering spaces and all times of day.
- Through research and community immersion, we will identify all key customer groups and develop custom strategies for their inclusion.
- Also, through research, community sentiment and project goals, we will create benchmarks for shared success and opportunity.
- We will conduct advanced visioning with city partners and the community to tailor our engagement program and inform project priorities and messaging.
- We will build tiered plans that prioritize support for impacted groups, while also educating the broader community and general public.
- We remain committed to language accessibility and inclusionary tactics that welcome all people and encourage participation.
- We commit to increasing transparency through regular and dedicated communication, documentation and reporting out to the public, including how their feedback is being used.
- We will leverage the feedback of our staff and frontline teams as key shareholders in the rider and community experience.
- We will continually adapt our engagement strategy through customer surveying and staying in tune with community need and project dynamics.
- We commit to meeting and exceeding the federal requirements of Title VI and those of our funding partners.
- We will build up our internal capacity and knowledge base for effective community engagement management and executive strategy, while continuing to leverage the expertise and bandwidth of the consultant community, as needed, for projects and programs.



SPECTRUM OF Community Engagement



Inform

- Provide the public with balanced, objective information to help them understand the project, alternatives and/or initiative where their voices can and should be heard.
- Provide them with ways to become engaged and share their feedback.
- Survey them for their priorities and preferences to help inform the community engagement strategy.
- Engage with city and community partners to assess benefits, opportunities and challenges with project or program and to also help inform the community engagement strategy.
- **Common Outcomes in this Stage:**
 - Community survey to understand level of interest/understanding, preferences and priorities.
 - Visioning workshop with respective city and community partners
 - Community engagement plan or scope for initial phases of project development
 - Project communications plan
 - Resource planning



Listen

- Obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or potential decisions through multiple feedback channels.
- Be ever-present in the community to listen across diverse groups and sentiments.
- **Common Outcome(s) in this Stage:**
 - Execution of community engagement plan
 - Stakeholder identification and engagement
 - Broader community education and PR
 - Benchmarking based on audience and goals



Involve

- Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and factored into final decision-making.
- Consider our engagement plan a “contract” with the community to hear their feedback and ensure their contributions will influence outcomes.
- Share clear communication on the feedback opportunities and ways to remain engaged, across multiple channels for diverse audiences.
- Resource the project or program according to benchmarks and the desired level of communication, outreach and overall involvement.
- **Common Outcomes in this Stage:**
 - Multi-prong engagement strategies, from large-scale public meetings, to 1:1 meetings, to digital outreach solutions
 - Transparency reporting for how input is received/utilized
 - Benchmark tracking
 - Clear, consistent and regular communication with immediately adjacent and broader community



Collaborate

- Partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
- Leverage the access and expertise provided by embedded community organizations and key community leaders to garner wide and honest feedback.
- Lean on and respect the institutional knowledge, history and future vision of community through its voices and via active relationship-building.
- **Common Outcomes in this Stage:**
 - Frequent touchpoints per engagement plan
 - Community partnerships to help achieve engagement goals
 - Deepen community participation



Empower

- Put final decision-making in the hands of the community and the leadership elected to serve the greater public.
- Prioritize the community voice throughout project development.
- Ensure input opportunities are positioned as seeking expert feedback from those who know their community or experience best.
- **Common Outcomes in this Stage:**
 - Continued strong engagement
 - Engagement reporting
 - Clear communication of decision-making timeline



Evaluate

- Document, evaluate and report input received and share how it will be incorporated.
- Provide transparency throughout the community input process.
- Continually evaluate community engagement effectiveness and adjust practices to better meet the needs of community and project goals.
- **Common Outcomes in this Stage:**
 - Evaluation and adjustment of engagement strategy
 - Robust documentation and reporting (throughout and at this stage)
 - Transparency reporting to community and final decision-makers
 - Community engagement plan updates for future stages
 - "Lessons learned" workshops and integration



Audiences



A critical stage in developing an effective community engagement plan is audience identification through research and community understanding.

These audiences should be reflective of all layers in a particular community and/or project area, from immediately impacted stakeholders to neighborhood groups, to employers/business organizations, to the broader subregion, region and/or the general public.

The following considerations should be evaluated to help with audience identification:

Research

Conduct a range of research to identify and understand the broad array of audiences and tailored tactics, including canvassing, online surveys, focus groups, existing meeting participation, data collection and analysis, etc.

Geography

Recognize project or program boundaries and be expansive in terms of affected audiences. Also consider geography when developing the engagement plan and tactics, offering a suite of choices to connect with near and far and short and long-term impacted stakeholders.

Demographics

Consider community demographics when identifying audiences and tactics, inclusive of racial and age composition, income level, language preference/proficiency, ridership saturation, technology adoption, etc.

Land use and activity centers

Understand the destinations and community development patterns within a particular community or project area. Leverage these areas to connect with audiences, better understand dynamics affecting community growth and how our project or program fits into the broader community vision.

Hard-to-reach markets

Identify historically hard-to-reach and/or under-represented groups in order to hear from all voices in the feedback process. Determine specific tactics and/or resources to engage with these groups.



Resources

As the engagement program is scoped, based on goals, audiences and our core values, resource planning is a next step in plan development.

Resources range from project owners and associated technical teams, who contribute to strategy, budget and overall project development, to internal Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and coordinators to external supports who can increase bandwidth, offer specialty expertise and/or provide tools that enhance our program. With each program, resources will often be a mix of all options and require strong interplay between all teams. The resources available can include:

Project owners & technical teams

The teams who lead the overall project or program and offer technical expertise in various disciplines. They manage goals, outcomes, timelines, approvals and overall project resources and budget. They will use this Framework and leverage internal SMEs to execute engagement, communication, outreach and marketing strategies for their programs.

Internal engagement leadership & SMEs

The teams who offer engagement expertise and “boots on the ground” to execute tailored engagement plans for projects across the organization and on behalf of member communities. From being dedicated to a capital project area to working on building system/rider engagement to executive strategy, the in-house engagement team delivers, working in tandem with project owners, cities, in-house creative teams, external partners and, certainly, the community.

Internal marketing & communications

The engagement and project teams work in partnership with our in-house marketing & communications teams to deliver messaging, creative campaigns, targeted media and public and media relations to strengthen our engagement work and project awareness, to the immediate project area and also more broadly.

External contractors

We have the support of contractors who can augment our efforts in the spaces of community engagement, marketing, graphic design, research and data collection/sentiment trending, including vendors on the Community Relations Support Services, Marketing and Advertising Support Services and Market Research contracts.

Staff & frontline teams

We leverage our staff and frontline workers to help us extend our reach, inform customer programs and to give us insights across engagement that drive customer-focused outcomes.

Internal capacity building

Beginning in 2024, we began work to augment our internal team with a Deputy Chief solely focused on stakeholder collaboration and an in-sourced management position (from contractor; approved in FY26 budget) that will drive engagement across our capital planning program. In addition, we are seeking ways to further embed institutional knowledge and strategy within our organization through greater training, experience and industry knowledge. While contractors will play an important role in our future engagement planning and strategy, leaning on a strong base of internal know-how will pay dividends across the long-term and enhance engagement outcomes.



COMMON
Barriers

The community and agency may face challenges in achieving meaningful engagement, which should be acknowledged and adjusted for in our engagement programs.

The challenges can range from broad, national trends to local dynamics to internal constraints. The barriers should be identified for each project or program, with techniques developed to help navigate these challenges and create a broad level of participation. The techniques will also adapt to the diversity of the challenges, including effective, embedded and multilingual translation; enhanced ADA accommodations; family support/childcare; community partnerships to help build trusting relationships; combining outreach efforts to recognize limited bandwidth; diversifying engagement tactics based on audience; etc.





The Toolbox

Valley Metro will use every tool available to power community engagement and we will constantly monitor the industry and the work of our peer agencies to integrate best practices and cutting-edge engagement tools.

Working closely with our partner agencies in a multi-party effort, we will craft public involvement and community engagement plans that establish goals, identify barriers and challenges and employ the right tools at the right times.

In-person public engagement

- Public meetings/open houses
- 1:1 or small group meetings
- Subregional outreach/meetings
- Existing community event participation
- Presence at local community gathering spaces (i.e. tabling events at senior centers, libraries, grocery stores, etc.)
- Canvassing

Community partnerships

- Partner communications

Virtual engagement

- Virtual open houses
- Telephone town halls

Advisory committees

On-system outreach

- On-board buses, trains, high volume transit centers or stops
- Pop-up events at high volume transit locations and/or transit-supportive community locations (i.e. senior centers, libraries)

Targeted advertising & signage

- Mailers/doorhangers
- Paid and organic digital media
- Signage at stations, stops, transit centers and on-board vehicles

Surveying

- Focus groups
- Intercept surveys
- Online surveys
- Regionwide phone surveys

Other technologies

- Project website
- Email communications
- Text messaging service
- Project hotline

Media engagement & broader PR strategies

Employee engagement

References:

- IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation
- Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) SYNTHESIS 170: Inclusive Public Participation in Transit Decision-Making (2023)

Connecting Communities and Enhancing Lives



Community Engagement Framework

Board Study Session | August 2025



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Today's Agenda

- Our Community Engagement Framework
 - Philosophy & Core Values
 - Spectrum of Engagement
 - Audiences & Resources
 - Toolbox
- Putting the Framework to work – COA example
- Feedback & next steps

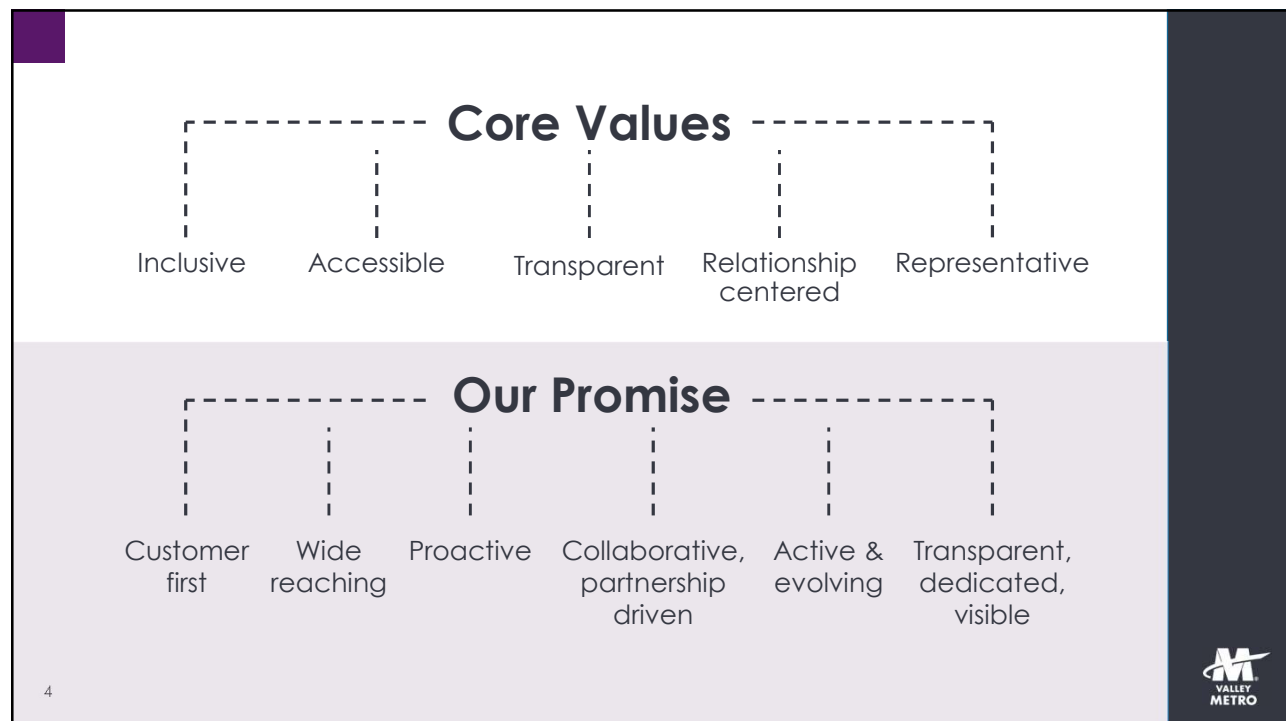


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Spectrum of Community Engagement

Outcomes



Inform

Listen

Involve

Collaborate

Empower

Evaluate

5



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Audiences & Resources



Audience identification

Research
Demographics
Community dynamics
Hard-to-reach markets



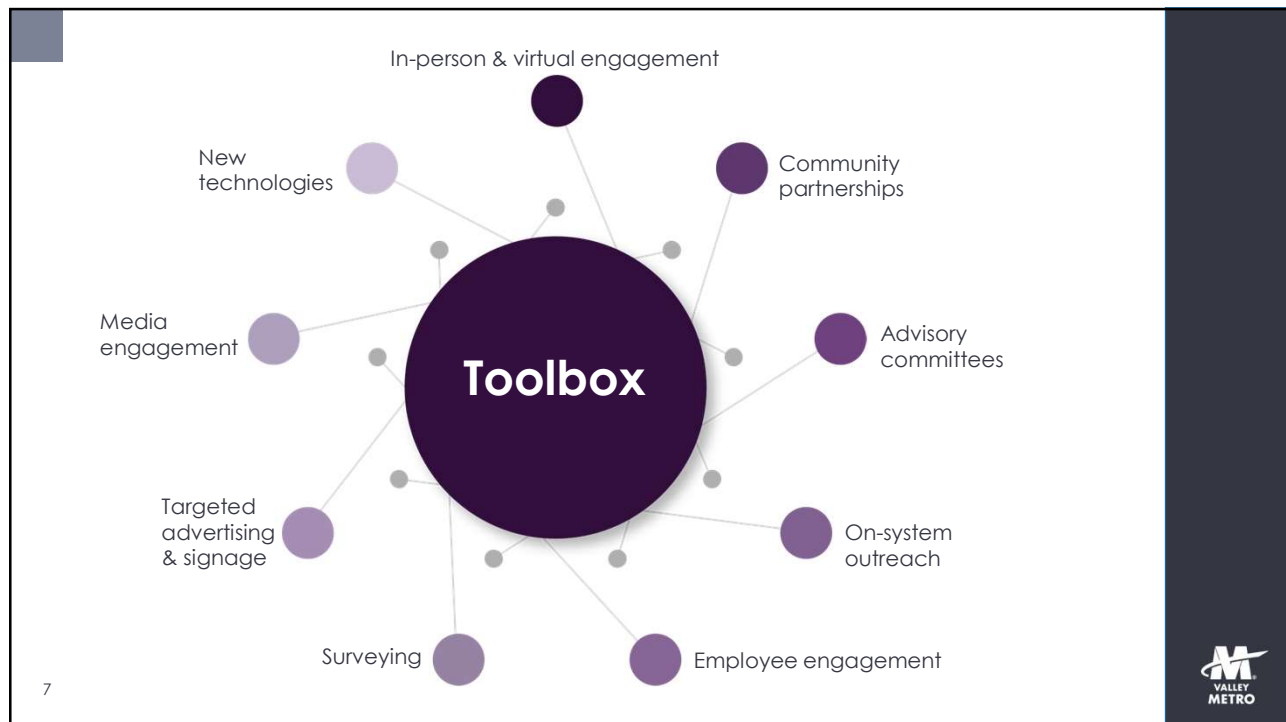
Resource planning

Internal SMEs
Consultant resources
Frontline teams

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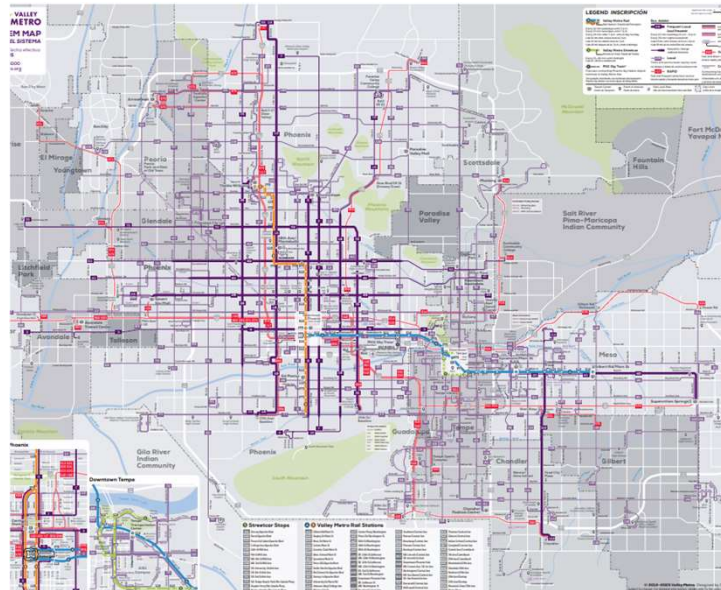
How Framework Will Be Used

- Guiding vision
- Foundation to future, more detailed plans & efforts, including:
 - Visioning
 - Research
 - Community engagement plans
 - Mitigation plans for impacted stakeholders
 - Communication plans for broader community
 - Benchmarking, reporting & transparency

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Example: Comprehensive Operational Analysis



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COA Phase I – Rider Priorities – Fall 2025

Inform



Listen



Involve

Discovery

- Technical analysis – ridership, demographics
- Project branding & message development
- Consultant integration
- Project education – COA what and why
- Broad initial engagement
- Graphics creation
- Engagement timeline & benchmarks
- Preference/priority definition

Stakeholder/Audience Mapping

- Identify and understand communication preferences
- Agency and key stakeholders, boards, commissions
- Community-based organizations
- Current riders
- Non-riders
- Operators – "Route Captains"
- Title VI, LEP populations
- Riders with disabilities & users of mobility devices

Tactics

- CBO "one-on-one" presentations
- Project website, story map
- Print and "meeting in a box" materials
- Quantitative initial survey
- Open houses & focus groups– virtual and in person
- "On the bus" rider surveys
- Pop-up events on system
- Earned media
- Social/digital media
- Leverage existing VM outreach

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COA Phase II – Reporting & Draft Recommendations – Spring 2026



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Welcome Your Input

How can we deepen relationships & outcomes?

How can we improve/add to Framework?

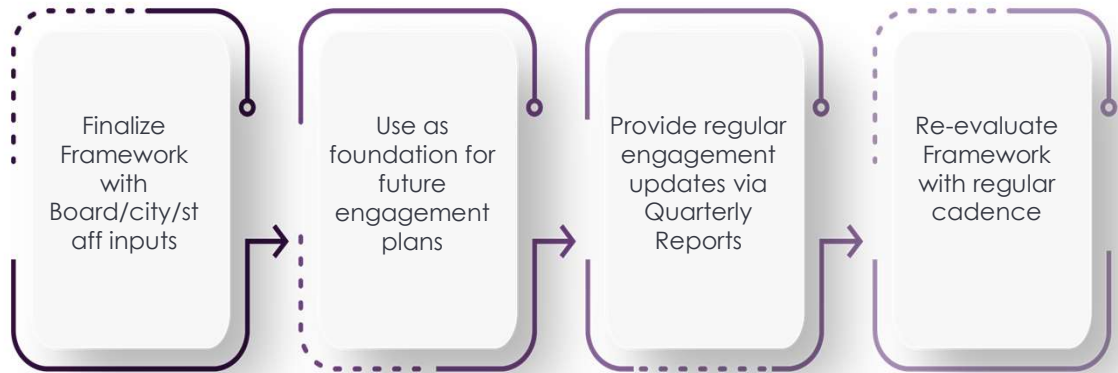
How can we support your cities?

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Next Steps



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Thank you for time & feedback

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