Standard Operating Procedure for Engagement (SOP-E)

FEBRUARY 15, 2024

Presentation Objectives

◁ **Provide update on SOP-E development & delivery**

◁ **Explore feedback**

◁ **Next steps**

Background

◁ **Standard Operating Procedure for Engagement (SOP-E) for infrastructure projects and major city programs recommended by Charlotte Equitable Development Commission (CEDC)**

◁ **Engagement is important, complex and a practice**

Artist: Ricardo Levins Morales

Process and context

SOP development process based on initial guidance
- CEDC recommendations and feedback, focus groups, DEI Strategy alignment
- Benchmarking
    - Researched and analyzed resources from 41 leading and comparable public agencies (ex: Portland, Atlanta region, Seattle, Austin, Denver, Salt Lake City, Boulder, Minneapolis, San Francisco, etc.)
    - Identified relevant SOP core elements and best practices
- Draft SOP- gather feedback, test and refine *working* SOP supported by training and resources

Community context -- Ways to interact with the city…
- <u>Get information</u>: 211, 311, etc.
- <u>Build community:</u> in your neighborhood: initiatives, block parties, listservs, etc.
- <u>Serve:</u> your city and community: as a volunteer, on a commission, in elected office, etc.
- <u>Participate:</u> help shape decisions on public projects, contact your Council member, vote, etc

SOP applies to **projects, programs, and efforts**
where there are decisions to be made that stakeholders can affect
in planning, housing, transportation, economic development, and others

SOP research results: Core elements of best-practice engagement

- **Engagement principles, commitments:** These are common but vary in their pointedness; some include an explicit <u>equity focus</u>; the best permeate all other engagement elements; some include strong accountability language, and some are anchored by ordinances with clear but simple, high-level language

- **Efforts to which this applies:** Exemplars applied these best practices to **all projects, programs, and efforts where there are decisions to be made that stakeholders can affect**

- **Collaborative application:** Robust versions have staff collaboratively assessing whether a project requires engagement or only communications, and then completing and implementing a detailed plan

- **IAP2 references:** These may include the Spectrum, Core Values, or Code of Ethics; Spectrum is most common, either in original or adapted format; Core Values may be included or reflected in principles

- **Evaluation:** When included, these focus on *process* indicators (vs. specific metrics) and may include outcomes; good examples include *stakeholder* perceptions, inclusion of priority stakeholders, impact on the project/decisions, etc.; an impressive version evaluates engagement work against their principles

- **Ways people can interact with the city:** Provided as context rather than within an SOP, the best explain things like how to be informed, have your say, serve your city, or access information; importantly, this provides context and differentiates "engagement" from other activities

- **Procedures, details:** Some embed procedures while most direct creation of engagement manuals, guides, or other supporting materials

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SOP outline

Framing, context

- How to interact with the city, e.g., be informed, have your say, serve your city, access info, etc.
- Definitions, roles and responsibilities

SOP contents

1. Purpose and scope of the SOP
2. Engagement guiding principles, accountability indicators, and outcomes
3. Engagement framework, IAP2 Core Values and Code of Ethics
4. Charlotte engagement assessment
5. Commitment to continuous improvement
6. Contacts and references

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Principles and definition of success

Principles

SOP is organized around guiding principles for engagement, to be upheld in all objectives:

- Inclusive
- Curious and Collaborative
- Transparent and Accountable

- Open and Timely
- Mutually Trusting and Respectful
- Strategic and Intentional

Indicators and outcomes (defining success)

- National best practices for SOPs and similar from leading government units move from principles to practice by defining success through clear indicators and outcomes
- Draft indicators and outcomes for the current principles must be "Charlottized" and then form the foundation for Charlotte to move to the forefront on equity-centered engagement

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Principles + Indicators and Outcomes (draft)
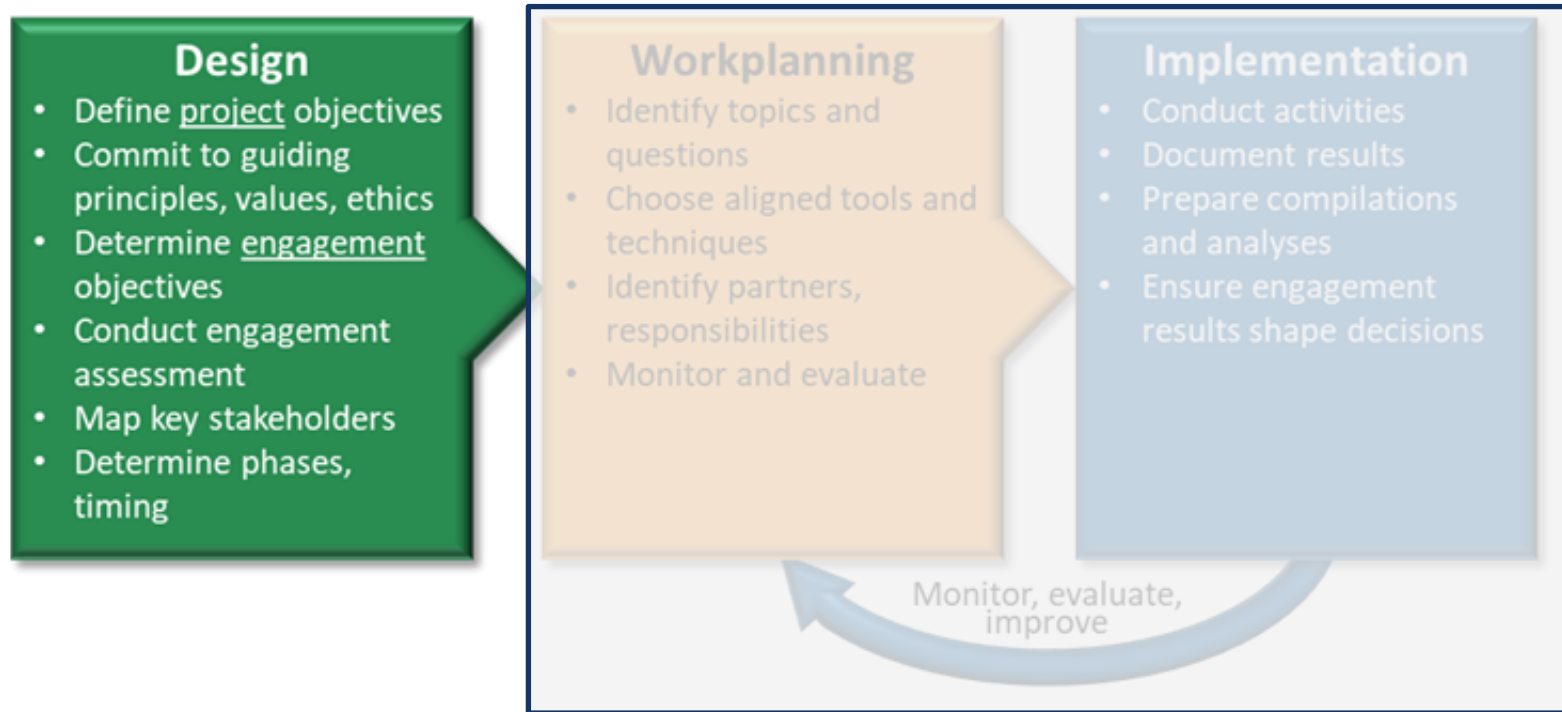
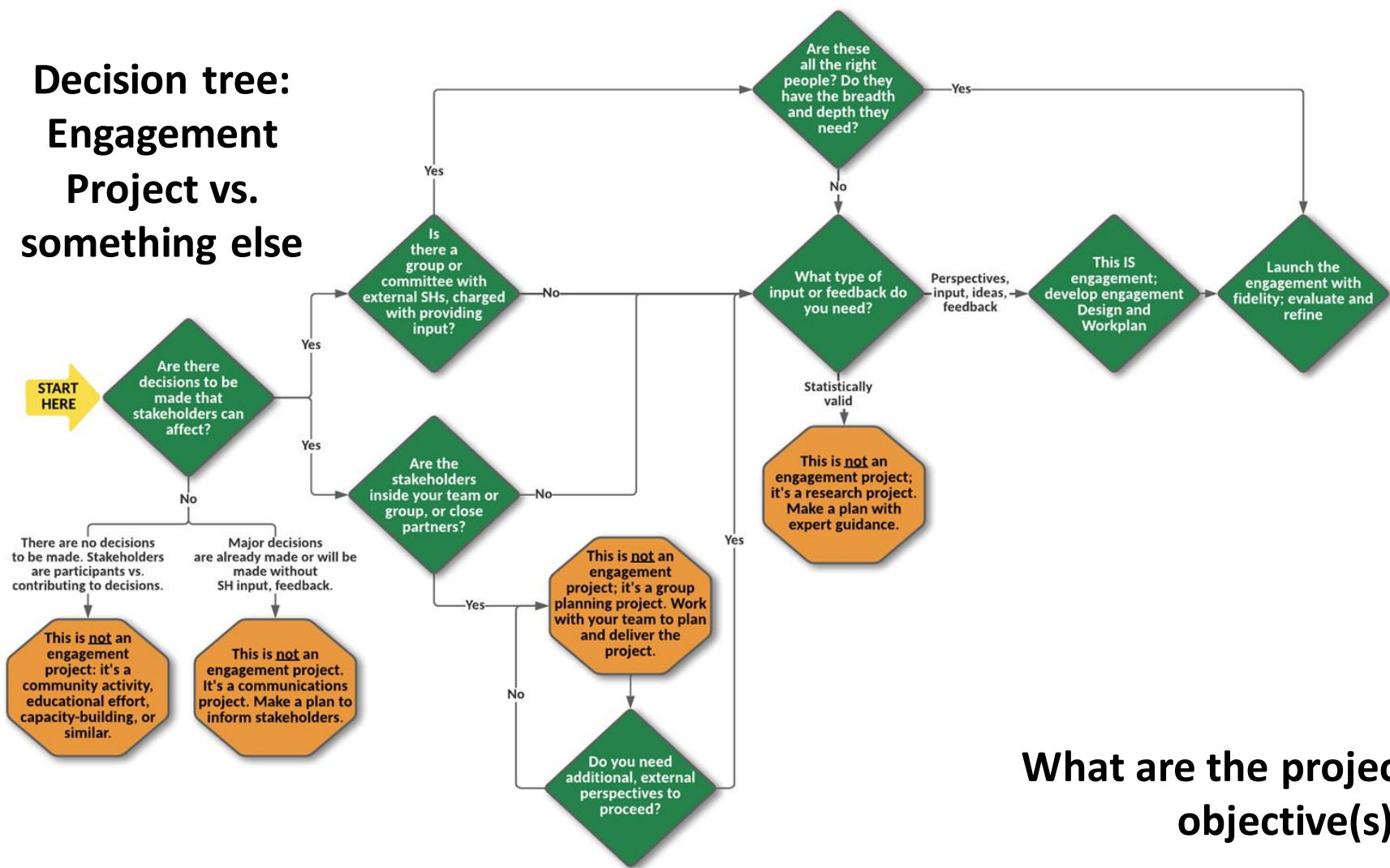| Principles *Charlotte has committed to these principles in our engagement efforts*	Indicators of Success *Engagement processes that align with these principles are expected to exhibit characteristics such as these*	Desired Outcomes *Adhering to these principles is expected to result in outcomes and benefits such as these*
Inclusive Engagement should be welcoming, providing all community members a reasonable opportunity to contribute.	• Engagement plans for city projects, programs, and initiatives identify all key stakeholders and explicitly those who are underrepresented, along with processes to respectfully reach out to and engage them • Engagement tools and techniques are carefully chosen to meet varied needs of key stakeholders • The full spectrum of identified key stakeholders participates in engagement processes • Engagement planning, processes, implementation, and impacts on decisions are regularly and collaboratively monitored, evaluated, and improved	• Community members are aware of engagement processes and supported to participate in meaningful ways • Participants feel welcomed, included, and respected • City projects, programs, and initiatives are informed and shaped by a diverse set of people, perspectives, ideas, needs, and priorities • Engagement efforts are continually improved by community feedback • Mutual trust and respect increase between community members and the city, especially with communities that have historically excluded from decision-making processes

Principles, Indicators, Outcomes (draft)

Principles	Indicators of Success	Desired Outcomes
Charlotte has committed to these principles in our engagement efforts	*Engagement processes that align with these principles are expected to exhibit characteristics such as these*	*Adhering to these principles is expected to result in outcomes and benefits such as these*
Curious and Collaborative Seek to understand, support, and encourage participants to work together to achieve equitable outcomes.	● Engagement processes are designed and implemented to encourage participants to work together ● Tools and techniques actively support mutual listening, learning, and understanding ● Engagement plans and implementation efforts embed equity, and staff and participants work to model, teach, and learn as they do the work ● Engagement efforts are implemented in partnership with community	● Processes leave community members with a better understanding of issues, opportunities, and multiple perspectives ● Communities have increased capacity to work across differences to achieve mutually beneficial, equitable results ● Community members and city staff increasingly collaborate to plan and implement welcoming, respectful, and rigorous engagement efforts

Engagement "framework"

For projects, programs, or initiatives that require an engagement plan, Charlotte uses the collaborative engagement framework to design, workplan, and implement the engagement process

Design
- Define project objectives
- Commit to guiding principles, values, ethics
- Determine engagement objectives
- Conduct engagement assessment
- Map key stakeholders
- Determine phases, timing

Workplanning
- Identify topics and questions
- Choose aligned tools and techniques
- Identify partners, responsibilities
- Monitor and evaluate

Implementation
- Conduct activities
- Document results
- Prepare compilations and analyses
- Ensure engagement results shape decisions

Monitor, evaluate, improve
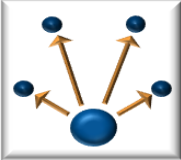
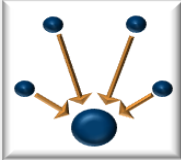# Decision tree: Engagement Project vs. something else
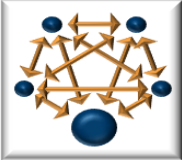

What are the project objective(s)?

Charlotte "engagement assessment" (engagement objective)

- Staff collaboratively conduct a rigorous **engagement assessment** to determine how best to work with community stakeholders on a project, program, or initiative
  - Considers policy or legal requirements, funding, and other project variables
  - 4th step in the engagement design process -- *after* the project overview and objectives, guiding principles + IAP2 Core Values and Code of Ethics, and engagement objectives

- **Key determination is whether or not projects have decisions to be made that stakeholders can affect:**

  - If yes: An engagement plan is required, which includes active outreach and communications
  - If no: Only a communications plan is required
  - For both yes and no: Communications efforts will provide timely, accurate, and accessible information that meets the needs of stakeholders

What are the engagement objective(s)?
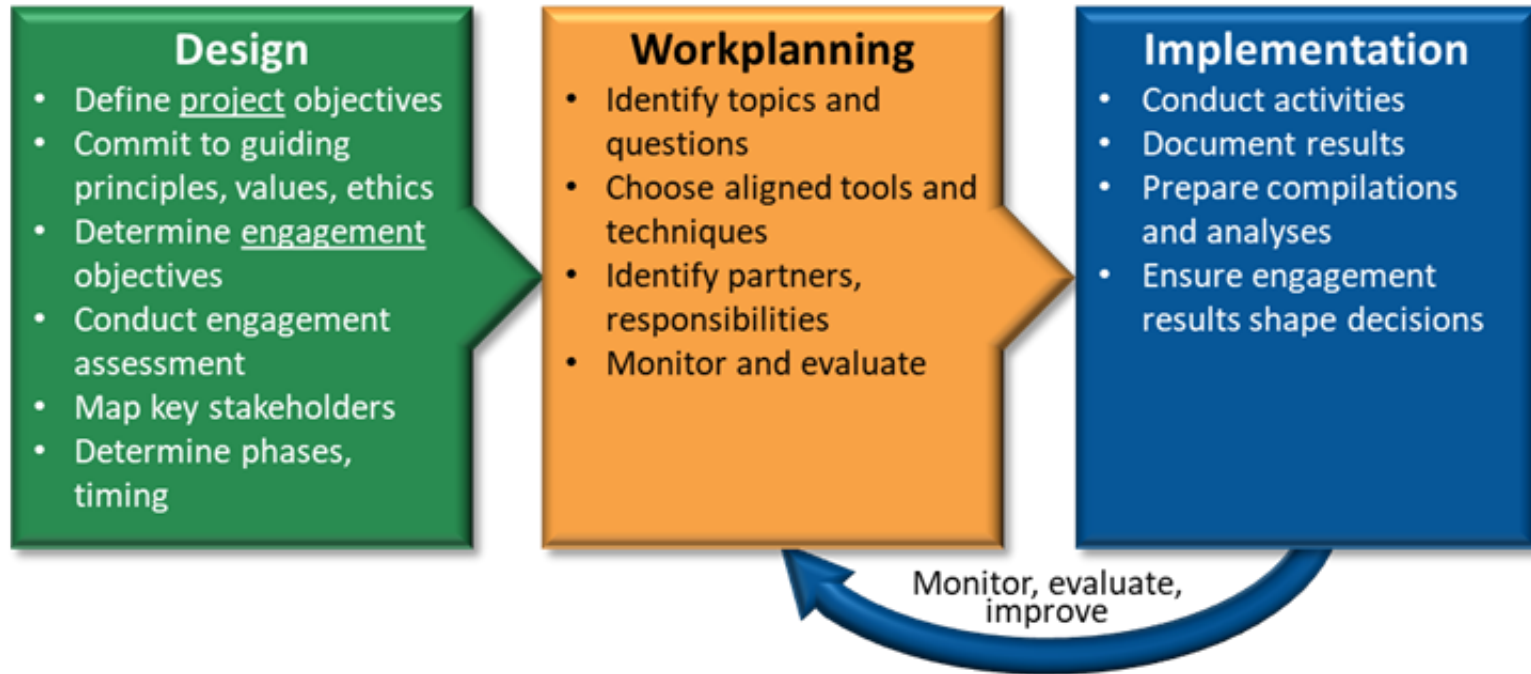
Increasing impact on the decision →

(Topic)	**Inform** (Communications only)	**Consult** (Engagement plan + communications)	**Involve** (Engagement plan + communications)	**Collaborate** (Engagement plan + communications)
Goal	Provide stakeholders with factual, accessible, timely, and balanced **information** to help them understand the project, program, or initiative.	Gather stakeholder **feedback** on project, program, or initiative analyses, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To **work directly with** stakeholders throughout the process to ensure their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To **partner** with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision including developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution.
Promise to the Public	The city will keep stakeholders informed.	The city will keep stakeholders informed, listen to and acknowledge their feedback, work to incorporate stakeholder feedback on the alternatives, and communicate how stakeholder feedback influenced decisions.	The city will work with stakeholders to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide information on how stakeholder input influenced decisions.	The city will look to stakeholders for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate advice and recommendations into the decisions to the extent possible.
Project examples	● Efforts on which decisions have already been made, whether or not community stakeholders were involved ● Implementation efforts ● Maintenance projects	● Multiyear, multiphase efforts that are in a later phase where the decisions are narrower or more limited ● Efforts with complex or extensive technical, regulatory, financial, or legal requirements that limit options or choices ● Limited-scope and/or simple efforts with narrow or limited options or choices	● Lengthy, multiphase efforts that are early in the planning process and with multiple issues, options ● Defined planning and similar projects that have multiple issues, options	● Complex, messy issues or projects for which the problems and/or solutions are not well defined and would benefit from a more participatory process ● Big-picture, large-scale, and/or very open projects that require broader and more extensive efforts to shape decisions and often to ensure successful implementation

Sample engagement objectives	*Communications* only	*Engagement* (+communications spt)	*Engagement* (+communications spt)	*Engagement* (+communications spt)
	● Explain the work being done and any specific impacts ● Provide information on how this work fits into the overall project and how decisions were made ● Include timeline ● Provide resources for people with questions (website, phone #, FAQs, etc.) ● Ensure communications content, formats, and distribution channels meet stakeholder needs and legal requirements	● Explain overall project, program or initiative ● Provide engagement commitments and what they mean for this project ● Clearly explain this engagement effort and what decisions stakeholders can (and cannot) help shape ● Provide graphic and narrative information on alternatives (or scenarios, options, etc.) ● Ensure we gather feedback from the full spectrum of key stakeholders	● Provide stakeholders with key project and process information, including the basis for this project, the focus, and examples ● Ensure process integrity and relevance, including content and process transparency ● Use tools and techniques that respect and support stakeholder access and meaningful contributions ● Create engagement opportunities where stakeholders can hear/learn from each other ● Cultivate lasting relationships so stakeholders stay involved in evaluation and refinements to ensure community benefits ● Ensure underrepresented voices are heard throughout the process	● Promote greater understanding by providing opportunities for people to share ideas and priorities, hear different perspectives, and learn from each other. ● Co-create opportunities that inspire the full spectrum of key stakeholders to advance common goals ● Co-create the engagement process design, implementation plan and execution, evaluation, and refinement ● Ensure decision makers understand and support the process so they are prepared for stakeholders perspectives to shape decisions
Sample tools and techniques *Tailored to align with project scope/content, stakeholder needs, and engagement scale*	Provide fact sheets, flyers, handouts, doorhangers, press releases, brochures, social media posts, websites, radio / TV / cable messages Host webinars, briefing sessions, presentations	Provide information about the project, engagement content, and questions for specific feedback Then consider comment boards, listening sessions, community events with feedback stations, intercept surveys, roundtable sessions, online questionnaires, photo tagging, pop-up booths, and similar	Provide information about the project, engagement content, and broader, more open-ended, and flexible questions for input. Then consider options listed for Consult plus other tools that are suited for open input and ideas such as mind-mapping, storytelling or story gathering (voice, drawings, photos, videos), workshops, small group idea-sharing, and similar	Provide information about the project, engagement content, and broader, more open-ended, and flexible questions for collaboration and discussion. Then consider tools and techniques that support working together, including some from Involve plus study or work groups and workshops, technical forums, appreciative inquiry, charrettes, focused conversations

Adapted and expanded from the Spectrum for Public Participation, ©International Association for Public Participation

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Monitor, evaluate, improve

Learnings and takeaways

◁ Heard that we could & should do more, framework was needed

◁ CEDC suggested what that might look like, benchmarking and input illustrated field and best practices

◁ SOP-E draft resulted - what it would be applicable to, what it would effect and affect, including current policies and practices and new opportunities

◁ Now working on *how-*

- counting meeting and attendance is easy, it's been the standard. Measuring feelings and action can be tough
- Stakeholders may have prioritized who we know or who you know, who might care about this topic, who will be angry if not invited.
  - *Stakeholder mapping isn't about excluding those folks, it's about **more**. Who do we need to meet, to connect with, who can help us to know and to reach them and what do they need to participate equitably*

◁ Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) pilot effort is underway, improvement & evaluation opportunity

◁ Expanded training and refinement will follow

Questions & Feedback Please

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Next steps

- February 2024 –
    - SOP-E working draft complete, being circulated for feedback w/refinement to follow
    - Strategic Energy Action Plan (SEAP) pilot project initiated, planning underway
    - Intro to Equity-Centered Engagement training (Feb 19th)

- February/March 2024 – Stakeholder Mapping training for SEAP

- March/April 2024 –
    - Prepare and lunch implementation of SEAP engagement plan
    - Refine SOP-E as needed based on learnings
    - Prepare SOP-E/Community Engagement resource toolkit

Thank you!

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