Community Engagement Conversations

Evaluating Community Engagement

April 17, 2025

Welcome!

Introduce Yourself in the Zoom chat

- Name
- Pronouns
- Agency / Organization
- *What is one evaluative question you have about your organization's community engagement work?*

An evaluative question asks, "***Well, did it work?***"

It should be directed toward assessing the design, implementation, improvement, or outcomes of a program

Welcome!

Group Agreements

- Listen for understanding, not disagreement
- Consider the opinions and experiences of others
- Bring a spirit of experimentation and creativity
- Step up, step back (take turns speaking, make room for others to speak)
- Have fun

What is MAPC?

**The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)** is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of the Metropolitan Boston region.

Our Mission:

We work toward a more equitable, sustainable, collaborative, and climate resilient future for the people who live and work in Greater Boston.

Areas of Work:

arts and culture, clean energy, climate, community engagement, land use planning, economic development, environment, housing, public health, public safety, transportation, public procurement
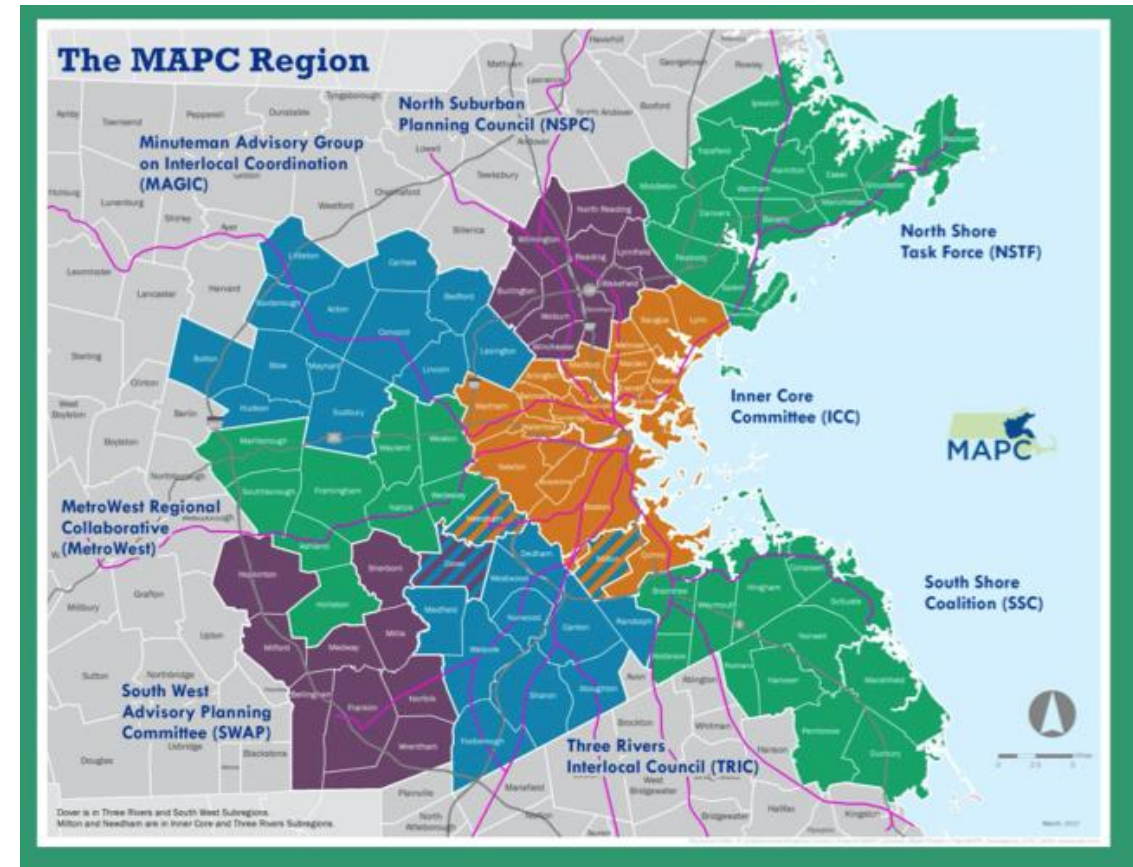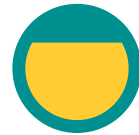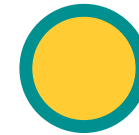
Welcome!

Agenda

Introductions and Overview

Overview of Program Evaluation and MAPC's Approach

Breakout Discussion and Reflection

Closing and Next Session

Community Engagement Conversations

Objectives for This Series:

- Create a space for attendees to share barriers they face around community engagement

- Gain a group understanding of community engagement principles, strategies, and frameworks

- Introduce participants to MAPC Community Engagement Team and how they can support your work

Objectives for Today's Session:

- Develop a shared understanding of how program evaluation principles can be applied to community engagement in policy and planning

- Share how MAPC has been experimenting with evaluating community engagement

- Introduce tools for evaluating equity in your community engagement efforts

Overview of Program Evaluation and MAPC's Approach

How might assessment be an empowering process that enables us to **create our path forward together,** helps us **"walk the talk" of our highest values**, and allows us to **share the story of our work** in ways that are not only accurate but also authentic?

—"Democratically Engaged Assessment", Imagining America

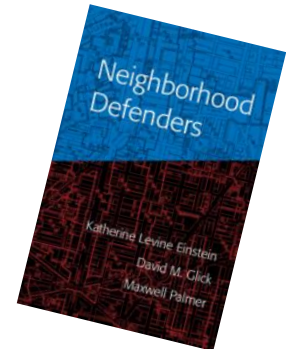# Why Evaluate Community Engagement?

Program Evaluation:

A practice that is used in various fields to **understand the effectiveness and impact** of programmatic work through **systematic analysis**

Accountability for alignment of actions with stated values

Understanding effectiveness of **relational work**

Demonstrating the need and impact of community engagement

Example: Katherine Levine Einstein's Neighborhood Defenders research

Purpose of Evaluating MAPC's Community Engagement

We are evaluating community engagement in order to:

Test our hypothesis that inclusive, equitable community engagement makes our plans more reflective of community needs and goals

Understand which community engagement approaches are **most effective** in different communities

Ensure the funding we put toward community engagement is **resulting in better plans** that get implemented

Approaching an Evaluation

Types of evaluations

▶ **Needs / Demand Assessment**

▶ **Process Evaluation**

Formative, Implementation, Performance

▶ **Outcome Evaluation**

Summative, Output, Impact, Results, Efficiency

Components of an evaluation

Purpose of Evaluation

Audience

Methods or Tasks

Data and Analysis Approach

Components of All Evaluations

Purpose of Evaluation

- What evaluative question are you seeking to answer?
- Why are you embarking on this evaluation? How can this evaluation advance broader organizational goals?

Audience

Methods or Tasks

- Who will be receiving or reviewing the results of your evaluation?
- How will community be involved throughout this process?
- What decisions or actions will this evaluation inform?

Data and Analysis Approach

Components of All Evaluations

Purpose of Evaluation

Audience

Methods or Tasks

Data and Analysis Approach

- What evaluation methodologies will you use and who will be involved in determining them? What phases of steps will you need to undertake?
- How can methodologies accommodate for multiple ways of knowing?

- What kinds of data do you need to collect to inform your evaluation question and purpose?
- How will you analyze the data in a manner consistent with the types of data you collected and the evaluation's purpose?
- What is needed to inspire trustworthiness and confidence across your audience?

Example: Evaluating Community Engagement Methods

Purpose of Evaluation

Audience

Methods or Tasks

Data and Analysis Approach

What engagement methods are most effective in different contexts?

Planners will use this evaluation to develop better project scopes with engagement methods tailored to ensure relevant community members are included.

Planners will **measure who participates and ask them to report the effectiveness** of different engagement methods.

Evaluators will **aggregate the data by engagement method and** analyze reach and effectiveness by engagement method.

Example: Evaluating Community Engagement Methods

MAPC

Purpose of Evaluation

What engagement methods are most effective in different contexts?

Audience

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Methods or Tasks

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Data and Analysis Approach

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Example: Evaluating Community Engagement Methods

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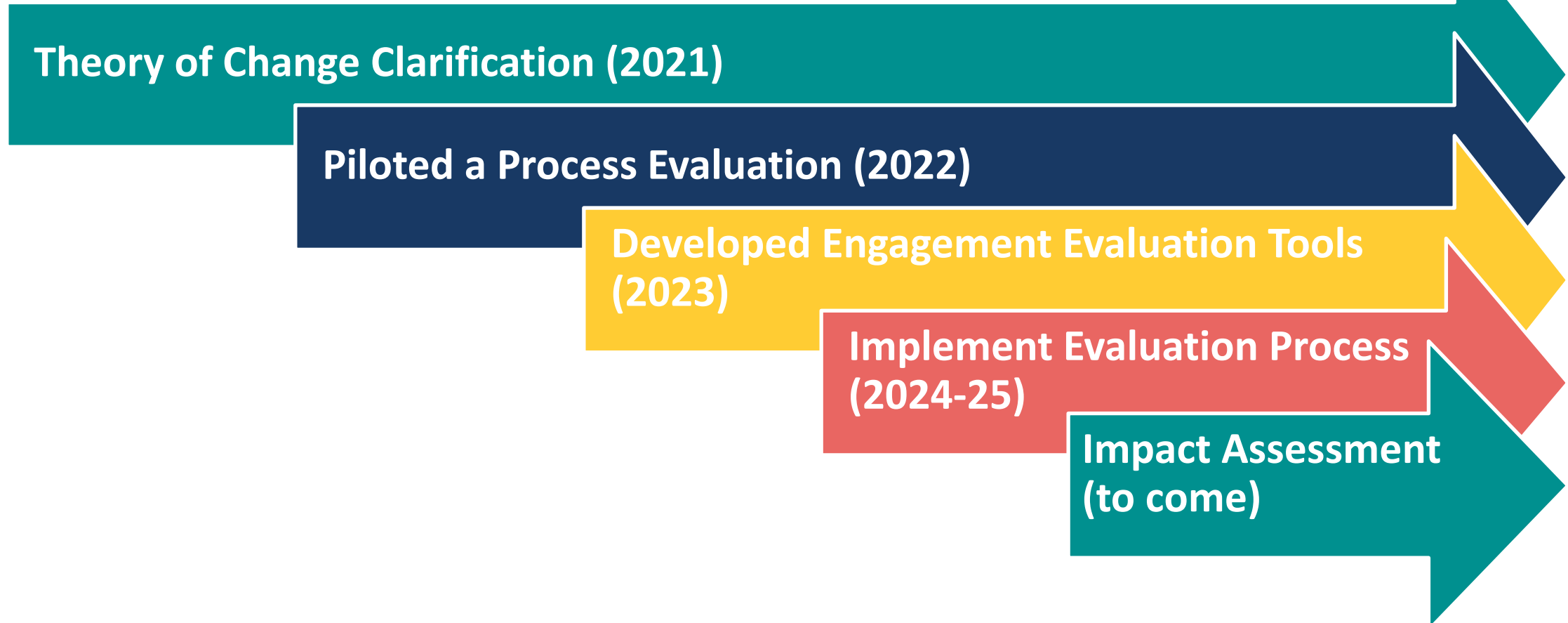
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Start Where You Are

MAPC Community Engagement Team's Evaluation Journey

Theory of Change Clarification (2021)

Piloted a Process Evaluation (2022)

Developed Engagement Evaluation Tools (2023)

Implement Evaluation Process (2024-25)

Impact Assessment (to come)

Designing an Evaluation of Your Community Engagement Practice

Your Turn: Evaluating Your Community Engagement Efforts

2 minutes

Silent Reflection

- Grab a blank paper or open a text doc.
- Revisit the "evaluative question" you wrote in the intro chat. Make any edits based on the content discussed so far.
- Note who is the audience of the evaluation.
- Brainstorm what methods and data might be relevant.

10 minutes

Pair and Share

- Take 2 minutes to introduce yourselves.
- Then, share your evaluation question and explain how it is relevant to your organization and your work.
- Halfway through, switch to the other person.
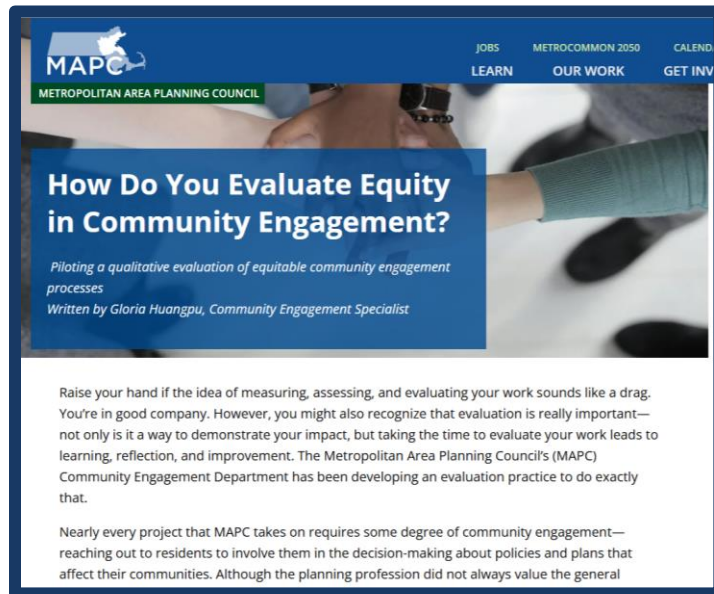
Breakout Group Debrief

Respond to the following questions in the Zoom chat:

- What came up in your breakout?

- How did your evaluative question change?

- What questions or reflections do you have about evaluating your organization's community engagement work?

Resources and Tools

Report (2022): Equitable Community Engagement Evaluation

Toolkit: Collecting Data to Evaluate Community Engagement
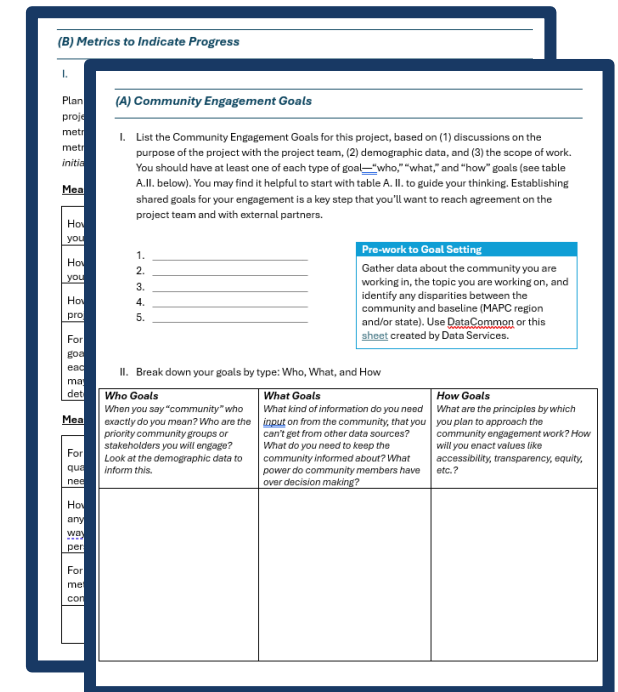
Workbook: Guide to Evaluating Community Engagement

Reach out if you want to help us test out any of these tools!
CommunityEngagement@mapc.org

Closing

Reflections on Today's Session

Today's Objectives

- Develop a shared understanding of how program evaluation principles can be applied to community engagement in policy and planning

- Share how MAPC has been experimenting with evaluating community engagement

- Introduce tools for evaluating equity in your community engagement efforts

Closing Questions:

- Something that squared up, or affirmed, what I already know?
- Something that changed my thinking or is new knowledge?
- Something that has me thinking in a new direction that I will take forward by applying or learning more about?

Please complete our feedback survey!

Next Community Engagement Conversation

September 19, 2024 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Principles of Community Engagement

You will be introduced to MAPC's approach to community engagement work.

October 17, 2024 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis

How to engage different voices when considering your strategic direction and plans.

November 21, 2024 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

The Community Engagement Wheel

Learn about the framework that can be used to approach any community engagement project.

January 16, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Establishing Relationship Foundations

Gain an understanding of how to build core foundational relationships with stakeholders, members of your community, partners, and others.

February 27, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Designing Accessible Engagement

Build an understanding of tools you can use to make engagement accessible for people of different languages and for persons with disabilities.

March 20, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Building/Engaging Community Groups

Learn about the best ways to involve key stakeholders in decision-making processes and how to manage expectations from residents while leading impactful public participation work.

April 17, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Evaluating Community Engagement

Build an understanding of tools to implement evaluation of equity in your community engagement.

May 6, 2025 | 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Facilitation Techniques

Build an understanding of how to facilitate digital and in-person meetings to help your participants share their needs and challenges.

Register at mapc.org

Reach Out – We Can Help

Services

- Development of Community Engagement Strategies
- Facilitation
- Strategic Coalition, Partnership, and Network Development
- Creative Engagement

Trainings and Workshops

- Principles of Community Engagement
- Hybrid Engagement
- Language Access
- Stakeholder Analysis
- Building and Engagement Community Advisory Groups

Contact us at: CommunityEngagement@mapc.org

Thank you!