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# Hearing All Voices



Figure 1.1: Colchester, VT Planning Commission Meeting (2019)  
([www.colchestervt.gov](http://www.colchestervt.gov))

## Benefits of Increasing Public Engagement in Your Community:

1. Broader understanding of community needs.
2. Improved decision-making quality.
3. Better access to skills, tools, and knowledge found within your community.
4. Heightened community trust in town officials and the planning process.
5. Enhanced opportunities to build social capital.
6. Much more!

## Meaningful Involvement Means:

- ✓ People have an opportunity to participate in decisions about activities that may affect their environment and/or health
- ✓ The public's contribution can influence the regulatory agency's decision
- ✓ Community concerns will be considered in the decision-making process
- ✓ Decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected (U.S. EPA)

*Plan for everyone in your community---even those that aren't sitting right in front of you.*

*What steps has your community taken to encourage meaningful involvement?*





*Your whole community benefits when everyone is able to participate in town matters.*

### Tips to Increase Participation:

1. Offer childcare, food, compensation and/or transportation to encourage broad participation in community meetings.
2. Honor lived experiences, technical expertise, AND academic information.
3. Choose locations and methods of publicizing meeting details (e.g. Front Porch Forum, town bulletin boards) that function to increase inclusivity.
4. Solicit feedback outside of meetings in order to gather information from those who were unable to attend.

*“Those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process”*

(International Association for Public Participation)

What methods will YOUR community adopt to increase community engagement?



To learn more, check out:

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ASTDR) [Principles of Community Engagement](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Public Participation Guide](#)
- Safe Family and Friends at Flood Ready Vermont [floodready.vermont.gov/safe](https://floodready.vermont.gov/safe)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) [Guide to Supporting Engagement and Resiliency in Rural Communities](#)