

WHAT IS THE INDIANAPOLIS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (IMPO)?

The Indianapolis MPO plans for and distributes transportation funds for roads, transit, bikeways, trails, and sidewalks to move people and goods in Central Indiana. Established in 1972, the IMPO has grown to include more than 35 members representing cities, towns, counties, and other transportation agencies within the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The MPA is the Urbanized Area (UA) of Central Indiana (the areas that are already mostly developed) plus the areas that are expected to urbanize over the next 20 years.

ORGANIZATION FOCUS

A CONTINUING, COOPERATIVE, AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

- Identifying Future Needs
- Preparing Effective Transportation Programs & Plans
- Community Involvement
- Transportation Policy Coordination

CORE PILLARS



Convene: Bring experts and community members together



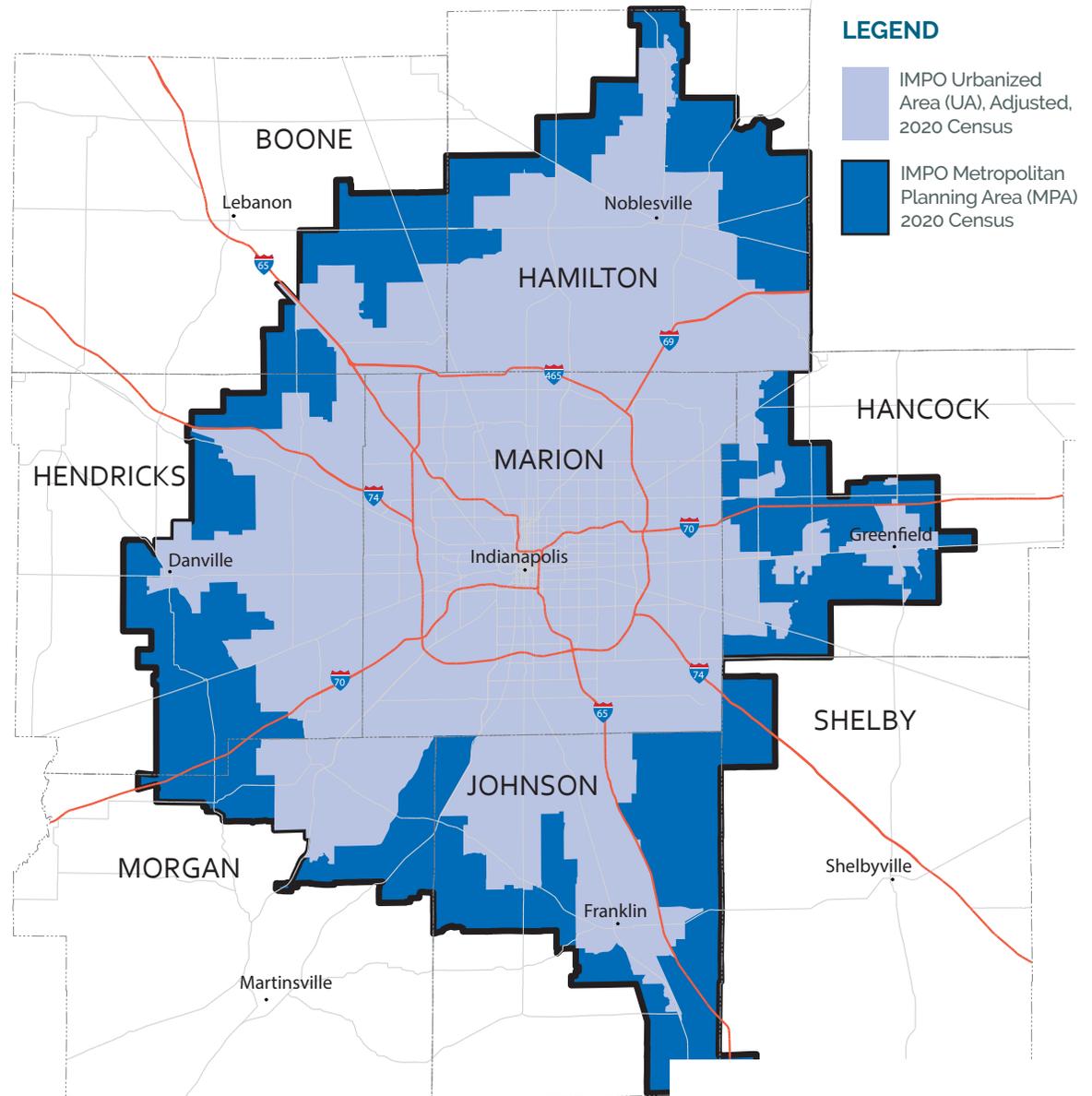
Inform: Provide reliable data to support planning and policy-making



Plan: Create and adopt infrastructure plans and track their implementation



Fund: Fund regionally-significant projects



PURPOSE

Community engagement is at the center of effective planning. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serves many different communities, and their voices and experiences are key to shaping projects that are fair and useful for everyone. This toolkit is meant to be a hands-on guide for staff, partners, and community leaders. It shows clear steps, simple techniques, and helpful tools to make public involvement easier, stronger, and more inclusive.

This guide highlights that engagement is not the same in every situation. To do it well, you need to make careful choices, stay flexible, and commit to hearing from a wide range of voices. This toolkit a roadmap for building trust, making better decisions, and ensuring every voice has the chance to help shape the region's future.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit is designed to walk you through different engagement methods and show why each one works, when it should be used, and which audiences it serves best. It also provides checklists and planning tools to help you prepare activities and ensure events are accessible. Along the way, you will find reminders to include translation services, offer accommodations, and even provide compensation to respect people's time and needs. By following these steps, you will be better equipped to plan ahead, carry out engagement with confidence, and evaluate results to measure success.

What This Toolkit Provides:

- Step-by-step instructions for choosing and using engagement techniques.
- Clear explanations of tools that gather feedback, build awareness, and strengthen trust.
- Advertising strategies to reach more people through social media, radio, newsletters, and community partners.
- Practical tips to make meetings more interactive and inclusive.

Why It Matters:

- Strong engagement makes projects more transparent and fair.
- Listening early helps uncover challenges before they grow.
- Community members are more likely to support and trust projects when they feel heard.
- Effective engagement builds long-term relationships that improve planning across the region.

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PREPARING

ENGAGEMENT PLANNING WORKSHEETS

Accessibility Checklist

- Is there accessible public transit?
- What assistance can be provided for people with disabilities?
- Can people with disabilities use the main entrance?
If not, make sure to note where they can enter in all advertisements.
- Does the meeting venue have restrooms suitable for all attendees including those with disabilities?
- Are there elevators if the meeting room is not on the main floor?
- If food/snacks are provided, are they allergy friendly?
- Do you need an interpreter for the meeting? *(large LEP population expected?)*
- Translate materials

Pre-Planning & Implementation Plan for Engagement

- What engagement activities need to happen?
 - Who is responsible for creating the activities?
 - Who is responsible for facilitating the activities?
 - What are the staffing/capacity needs?
 - What resources are needed? (translation, boards, etc)
 - What are success measures? (How will we know we have been successful?)
 - When does this need to be done?
 - How will feedback be incorporated?
- How will this be advertised?
 - Why is this important?
 - What community partners should be involved and how?
 - Who are stakeholders in the process? *(general public, certain racial/ethnic groups, advocacy groups, businesses, developers, decision makers, specific neighborhoods)*
 - Key dates for public involvement
 - Press release?



SCAN TO ACCESS:
CHECKLIST FORM



SCAN TO ACCESS:
PLAN FORM

TECHNIQUES

MEETING IN A BOX

What: A public engagement technique designed for community groups, neighborhood associations, or friends to gather at a convenient time and location to share their opinions about a plan or project in their community. Participants are given a kit that contains everything needed to hold a meeting/discussion on their own.

- Instruction sheet for host/facilitator
- Discussion questions
- Worksheets for participant responses
- If appropriate, maps with sticky dots or post-it notes for comments

Kit can be completely paper based, downloadable, and posted on a project website for any interested individual or organization to use or can be mailed or dropped off by IMPO staff. If mailed, include return packaging and postage to return to the IMPO.

Kits are usually distributed in a limited number (*select a few organizations to partner with*)

Why: Effective technique because it leverages social connections that already exist in a community. Residents are more likely to participate and engage with a familiar organization or community member than an agency that might be perceived as an “outsider” to the community.

When: most effective when soliciting detailed feedback from community members. Meeting in a Box encourages small group conversation and discussion, often associated with a deeper level of engagement. Can also be used to distribute surveys and collect more quantitative data as well.

Audience: has broad appeal to a variety of audiences but most effective in areas with high civic participation rates or very active organizations.

Effort: Significant effort up front to develop materials for the kit. Depending on complexity and the specific project and type of materials, upfront time investment could be a few days to a few weeks. Investment of time to publicize and partner with organizations/groups to run the meeting.

- Social media, partner organizations, earned media help recruit groups
- Once kits are distributed, there is almost no staff time required
- Possible occasional trouble shooting or responding to questions from participating groups
- Upfront time investment, but little ongoing time required
- As kits are returned or the deadline passes, moderate time investment to create a combined feedback summary

EXAMPLES OF KITS

City of Evanston

ILLINOIS

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SgFwySb2gw

City of Victoria

BRITISH COLUMBIA

engage.victoria.ca/ocp/news_feed/meeting-in-a-box

City of Edina Climate Action Plan

MAPLEWOOD, MINNESOTA

palebluedot.llc/edina-cap-meeting-in-a-box

City of Fort Lauderdale

FLORIDA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThrosdAK2Xs>

KITS CAN ALSO INCLUDE OTHER MEETING MATERIALS SUCH AS

Project Posters // Post-its // Stickers

Other materials relevant to the specific meeting design of the kit

DEPENDENT ON TYPES OF MATERIALS IN THE KIT COSTS CAN VARY, CONSIDER:

PROFESSIONAL PRINTING

(higher costs, but still budget-friendly)

MAIL PACKAGING, POSTAGE

DOWNLOADABLE

(least expensive)

OPEN HOUSE

What: Buffet-style meeting where guests can drop in at any time and talk one-on-one with the project team/staff at various stations. This informal setting for the public to gain information about a specific project/plan has no set formal agenda, and allows the public to get information at their own pace.

Attendees are encouraged to offer opinions, comments, and preferences to staff (orally or in writing). Usually, different stations that offer information and/or have feedback activities or prompts are setup to maximize group setting engagement.

Why: A casual format allows direct connection with attendees, and allows for offering input than they would in a more formal setting.

You're also able to break down projects into parts at each station allowing attendees to focus on specific aspects that interest them or are more important to them. More flexibility for participants is to attend is key, since it is come and go as you can for a set time period (a couple hours, an entire day, etc).

When: Communicating the complex, large-scale, and multifaceted plans to the public requires a strategy that prioritizes public engagement. This approach is ideal for gathering feedback, both general information and specific insights. This interactive method helps shape plans still in development.

Audience: Actively encourage attendance of those who will be impacted by the projects/ plans (businesses, property owners, local residents, etc)

Effort: Ensure a successful event by focusing on:

- Creating materials for each station
- Advertising – attendance is important and a lot of the effort should be put into getting people to come
- Training staff on each station

Cost: Minimal to moderate, things to consider:

- Space rental
- Audio/Visual equipment
- Advertising the meeting
- Developing materials for the meeting (*posters, handouts, supplies, etc.*)
- Refreshments



POP-UP MEETINGS AND TABLING

What: A way to engage the public by bringing the meetings to where the people already are, rather than asking them to go out of their way to come to a meeting at a specific location.

Often short interactions with people, and can be simply informative distributing brochures/handouts, displaying posters to more participatory like surveys, activity board, etc.

- **Consider:** Including a demographics sheet. Optional to fill out, helps balance results. Race, ethnicity, income, zip code, etc.

Why: People are busy and it is difficult to find time to go to a public meeting, and this format allows you to attend gatherings/events that are heavily trafficked such as farmers markets, trails, community events.

Not one and done. It can be moved to different events allowing for multiple meetings in different areas.

When: Want to distribute information or solicit feedback without having to garner participation. An opportunity to advertise specific projects.

Audience: Pop-ups/tabling attracts participants who often would not otherwise be able to contribute or be aware of the opportunity to contribute.

- **Consider:** Is the event in a neighborhood that has a large limited English proficiency (LEP) speakers and need to translate materials and have an interpreter present

Effort: Will vary depending on:

- Materials being developed or distributed
- Number of events and locations

Cost: Minimal, things to consider:

- Booth space
- Refreshments
(optional)
- Printing of materials
(informational brochures or interactive activities)
- Giveaways/swag
- Translations/Interpreter



FOCUS GROUPS/COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

What: A group session enabling conversational feedback. Usually in partnership with communities and/or neighborhood associations.

Why: Not just informative, but allows for the community to feel empowered and confident that their voices are heard. An interactive approach designed to gather detailed input, or included in an existing group meeting/gathering.

When: Can be used to initiate a cycle of input.

- Feedback from community, report back outcomes later as the project develops)

Audience: Can be used for audiences that will feel more comfortable sharing personal opinions in small group settings.

- **Example:** GREAT WAY TO ENGAGE YOUTH
 - Back-to-School day
 - Class registration day
 - Impact Teen Drivers: impactteendrivers.org/indiana
 - IG school partnership program (*bus passes for kids*)

Effort: Will vary depending on:

- Recruit participation (*neighborhoods, youth groups, etc*)
- Coordination with group
- Developing discussion prompts or activities
- Live polling works well
- Finding a meeting location

Cost: Minimal, things to consider:

- Possible cost for space
- Any materials needed
- Refreshments/snacks

LISTENING SESSIONS

This method is similar to a focus group or community conversation, but it's more open-ended and flexible.

It involves partnering with community organizations to host listening sessions and attract participants. The main goal is to listen to what community members have to say rather than just sharing information. This approach helps gather a wide range of ideas and gives community members confidence that their voices are heard.

You might use this method when you need more diverse opinions or insights, especially for long-term planning like the MTP or other future projects. It's a good way to engage people who may feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts in small groups, including youth.

THE COSTS ARE USUALLY MINIMAL, MOSTLY FOR REFRESHMENTS AND MEETING SPACE.



STREET TEAMS

What: Often vendor based, these small teams that are able to focus on attending events, specific types of businesses, locations like trailheads, on buses

Why: Greater geographic reach using fewer IMPO staff members if a vendor is hired to target specific geographic areas to get input in surveys.

When: Needing to reach a specific area of the region, or widespread reach, when there is an online or paper survey to complete, or if budget allows for hiring a vendor to get the reach needed.

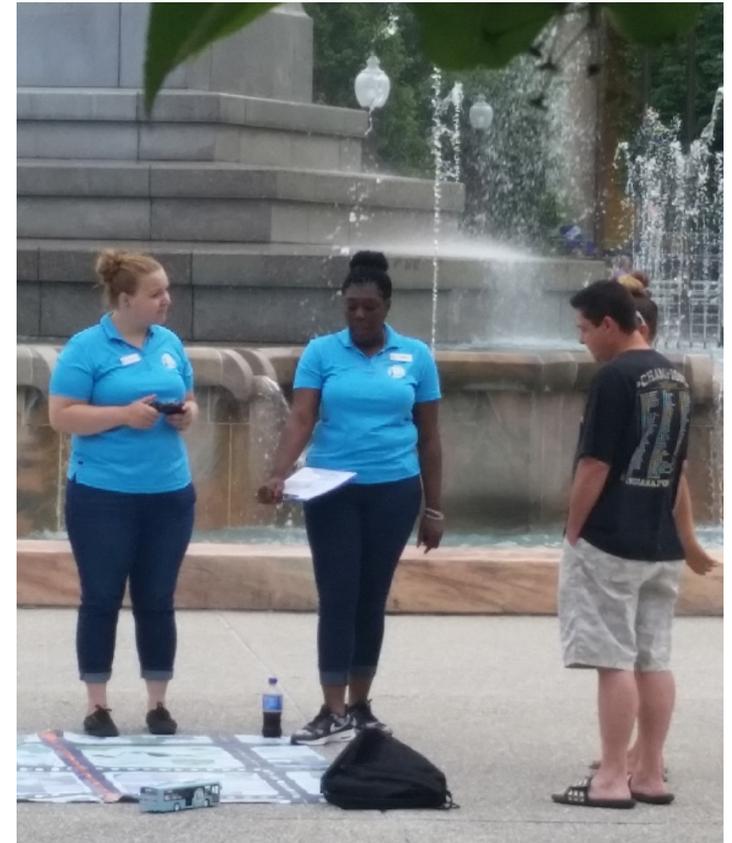
Audience: Places where people who don't often engage with the IMPO might gather (salons, bodegas, community centers, health fairs, cultural festivals, etc.)

- **Consider:** General public in places with high foot-traffic
(town centers, shopping centers, libraries, etc.)
- **Example:** GIVE OUT SURVEYS ON BUSES
 - Coordinate with Transit Ambassadors

Effort: Will vary depending on development of a survey, hiring or training a vendor.

Cost: Can be costly, things to consider:

- Vendor rate and number of locations needed to visit
- Printing information on special cards or fans
- Give-away items or interactive equipment to attract attention
- Survey tool subscriptions



VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND WEBINARS

What: Meeting on Zoom or other online conference call platform. (Use Webinar setting to avoid potential inappropriate images etc.). Often should prepare a slide deck with information and allow time for questions/comments.

Why: Removes barrier for transportation to a meeting. Reduces the amount of time to get to a meeting making it more accessible. Oftentimes it can be a more accessible option allowing for different times of the day and meeting with people from different communities at once.

- Provides flexibility to offer multiple repeat opportunities on various days of the weeks and times of days to reach more people without physical travel

When: Good option to allow for multiple meetings at different times/days. When the meeting is about something not location specific and need to have a full region-wide reach of feedback.

Audience: Can reach people not able to travel as easily to a meeting whether because of location, time constraints, or other abilities.

Effort: Minimal, will vary depending on:

- Need meeting platform
- Prepare slide deck
- Could use live polling and QR codes to share online surveys or comment forms

Cost: Minimal, things to consider:

- Subscription to online platform and possibly live polling tool.



TOOLS

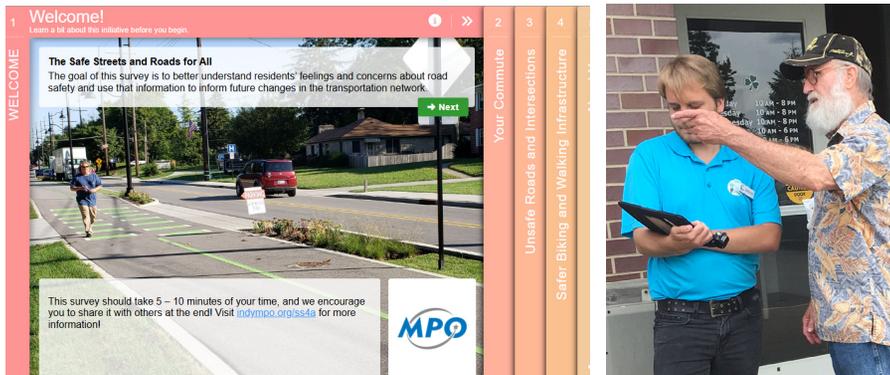
LIVE POLLING ON-SITE

Using software in IMPO slideshow presentations that allows the presenter to request live feedback from the audience, which they can provide with their own smart device or one provided to them if requested

- **Example:** Poll Everywhere

ONLINE SURVEYS

- Multiple choice, etc.
- Pin-drops on maps to add comments
- Prioritizing recommendations or concerns
 - **Example:** MetroQuest, Survey Monkey, Survey123



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

- Maps to mark up
- Prompts where participants can vote with sticky dots, add comments on post-its, drop a chip in the bucket, etc.
- Surveys using provided tablets or paper

COMPENSATION

- Bus passes
- Swag like bike gear (lights, etc.) – something useful
- Gift Cards

ADVERTISING

SOCIAL MEDIA (PAID OR NOT)

- **Organic reach:** scheduled posting, tagging partners, etc.
- **Paid reach:** advertisement, sometimes directed toward audiences specifying age, location, interest, or other characteristic

PRINT/ONLINE ADVERTISING

- Local Magazines
- Newspaper advertisements
- Newspaper letters to the editor (unpaid)
- Local online blogs

RADIO ADVERTISING

- **Airwave:** local radio stations
- **Streaming:** Pandora, Spotify, etc.
 - **Examples:** AM 1310 [for others, maybe look at station advertising packages for the audiences that make sense]

PARTNER ORGANIZATION SHARES

- newsletters, socials
- develop a share kit with draft language and media
- Make it as simple as possible for organizations to copy/paste into their newsletters or social media platforms

TEMPO NEWSLETTER

- organic reach
- encourage people to sign up for project updates, etc.
- include public input opportunities
- actions to reduce emissions and air pollution.



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