

Vision Generation Session

FAQS

VISION GENERATION

What is a Vision Statement?

- A vision statement is a shared description of a desired future for a community. There are many forms a vision might take, and many ways of undertaking the visioning process, but the final result should be a vision statement that is as reflective of the entire community's goals and needs as possible.

Who Takes the Lead in the Visioning Process?

- There are different models for who leads in the visioning process. In the vision generation session, you will hear from visioning projects led by volunteers, non-profits, and governments. There are strengths and weaknesses with each approach. A government or institution can provide a framework and paid staff, while a community-led process can provide flexibility and buy-in.

How Many People are Involved?

- There are generally different groups involved in a visioning process, and the numbers vary depending on the group. Often, you will have a steering or core group involved in the process that generally includes ten to twenty people. Focus groups might be another group involved in the process, and community members are generally invited to open houses or forums that represent another fifty to perhaps one or two hundred people. If there is a survey component to your process, this will likely involve many hundreds or even in the thousands of people. All of this will depend, of course, on the size of your community and the strength of your outreach activities.
- *Ultimately, a BEST PRACTICE is to seek to be 'profoundly inclusive'. Engage and involve as much of your community as possible throughout the process.*

How Much Does it Cost? How is it Funded?

- This will vary widely depending on the approach taken by your community. Bringing in technical advisers will add cost. The more volunteer time and energy you engage, the less the process will cost, but the more time it will take. Depending on the process undertaken, the process seems to range from about \$20,000 and up. Again, it depends on the size of your community, and the type of process you undertake.
- Technical assistance grants are available to governments and organizations for this type of project. The Ford Family Foundation has been a funding partner for everyone presenting as part of this vision generation session. Communities have raised funds from local service clubs, organizations, governmental agencies, and even individual residents to fund these efforts. If a non-profit or municipal entity is taking the lead, it may be that funding is included as part of a general budget in the fiscal year for visioning purposes. If your community needs a vision, there are ways to fund that undertaking.
- There are resources ideas for community building listed in the **Sustaining Long Term Community Action Training Session FAQs**.

What Shape Does a Vision Statement Take?

- Vision statements take different forms, from something as simple as a couple lines, to something closer to a strategic plan. It may be worthwhile to consider the form

you would like your vision to take at the outset of your visioning process, as that may inform the kind of questions and methods you choose.

How Do You Engage Hard-to-Find Communities (Outliers)?

- You do so with effort and creativity. While many in a community are reachable through community newsletters and social media, others are not. In order to engage it is necessary to find them where they are.
- Personal asks, especially from members of the hard-to-reach communities, is one very important step. When you are creating a group to oversee a visioning process, make an intention choice to include members of the groups you will need to reach.
- Go to places where those groups can be found. If you are looking for parent and students, show up at school sporting events.
- Churches and service organizations can be great partners.
- Partner with local businesses that serve people you want to reach – what about the local marijuana dispensary?
- Have you considered the tattoo parlor down the street?
- Are there food markets or restaurants that are serving people of color in your community and might distribute surveys?
- Is there a gathering place in the most rural outreach of your community or region?
- A social worker or organization serving the unhoused who might help?
- All of these are questions to ask. But nothing beats personal asks from people invested in the visioning process who have personal connections in the community you are hoping to reach.

How Do You Respond to Naysayers?

- The more work you do engaging everyone in your vision process, the fewer naysayers you are likely to have.
- Be clear with doubters about the length and depth of the process you undertook, and why it is a fair and accurate representation of (most of) your community's vision for the future.
- Look for common ground and ask for buy-in and support on places you have overlap even if you agree to disagree on some aspects of the process.
- If a naysayer is concerned about the process and is communicating their skepticism in the hope that their concern will be overcome, they should be welcomed to the process.
- If a naysayer is simply sowing seeds of doubt without any constructive intent, you may want to be careful. Negativity can easily derail a process that relies heavily on volunteer support.
- Being Profoundly Inclusive is the goal, but not when doing so imperils the effort.

Does Your City Need to Adopt the Vision?

- This depends on what the vision is and why you undertook visioning in the first place.
- Citizen-led vision processes will be different than city-led processes.
- Regional processes are different than one rooted in a single community.
- Consider what the adoption might accomplish. Think about working with local governments and other institutions to adopt pieces of the vision that lie within their purview. There are many approaches to this part of the process.
- If the city funded or staffed the effort, it is likely expected that council would adopt the final output. Likewise if the process was distinctly city-wide.

How Often Does a Community Need to Go Through This?

- A good time to consider a vision might be when there is a big change coming, or when a big change is needed. Are people looking around and wondering about the need for shared action? Do you hear a lament that many great agencies and people are working without common goals? Those are all organic indications that the time has come to undertake the visioning process.
- Some communities can create a 20-year vision that leads directly to 20 years of efforts and forward progress.