

## Equity and Engagement Checklist

*Developed by Engagement and Equity TASC, December, 2012*

In order to assure maximum and equitable participation by all residents of a community or region, the Equity and Engagement Technical Assistance Subcommittee of the Granite State Future project has developed the following suggestions for conducting planning initiatives.

1. Strive for **demographically representative engagement** that reflects the community or region where planning is occurring. This may entail special efforts to reach out and engage groups that traditionally have not participated in such work, for reasons of place, economic status, age, education levels, mobility limitations or other disabilities, or cultural and ethnic differences.
2. To the extent that is legally permissible, create opportunities for **participatory decision making** as the first principle in planning activities. Planners have special expertise and knowledge. That expertise and knowledge should be shared with community partners as much as possible, in order to increase informed participation, a shared sense of investment in decisions and implementation, and equitable relationships. The goal of **mutual empowerment of planners and community members** is crucial.
3. As planning goals are set and decisions are made, **consider the impact of those decisions (before they are finalized) on all constituent groups and sectors** in a community or region.
4. In public conversations, media releases, and reports published for public consumption, **use plain, everyday language accessible to anyone** (including considerations of reading level and translation from English to other languages as appropriate).
5. As plans and goals are developed, **take into account their impact on diverse groups**, including best judgments about what groups could be advantaged and what groups could be disadvantaged by those decisions, and taking steps to mitigate any anticipated losses of resources, status, or power by those who might be disadvantaged.
6. Design **effective feedback loops** to inform participants about the ways their input was considered and acted upon.
7. Respect the **core value of local control** that characterizes New Hampshire's political and community culture. Plans and goals that require regional collaboration (for example in areas such as transportation, natural resource management, public school governance, economic development) should strive to maintain community identity and integrity as much as possible.
8. Planning processes must **attend to the "soft infrastructure" of communities**—the people who live, work, and interact with each other, not just the built environment that serves those people.

9. Specific planning decisions concerned with principles of equity will take into account such matters as where stores and businesses are located with respect to walking and transportation routes used by less affluent or minority populations or those with special mobility needs; access to fresh, affordable foods; personal safety; and other criteria that reflect the goal of **maximum access and participation in community life**.
10. Practices of equitable engagement in local and regional planning efforts should be **sufficiently consistent across sites** so that residents moving from one community to another will have similar access to and be able to understand planning and decision-making processes.