**WSHFC Community Engagement Response Form**

**To support points categories in section 4.5 of the scoring sheet**

With the stated goal of financing more developments BY and FOR the community, WSHFC seeks to empower communities to design, develop, manage, and own affordable housing developments in the long term. The first steps for developers to take include entering communities without causing harm\*, identifying potential community partners, and beginning a relationship with the community where developers and Community Based Organizations are accountable to each other.

As we begin integrating the community voice into the projects financed by WSHFC multi-family programs, we will be learning best practices together with developers and CBOs, and will be using information gathered during the application process in each round to inform the next. This is and will always be an iterative process, and we are grateful to each and every applicant for contributing to that process. Though community engagement and partnership with CBOs are currently optional and points are awarded for these inclusive practices, we anticipate that they will transition to threshold requirements in future rounds.

The Community Engagement Toolkits posted on our website will help you find processes and recommendations for completing this form. Other organizations developed these toolkits for purposes other than housing—they are guides and resources to help you form your own community engagement plan and should not be taken as step-by-step instructions. Please note: WSHFC policy supersedes any requirement included in the toolkits provided.

**Each applicant should address the following elements in a narrative response, entered directly into this document where indicated. Return to the Commission as an upload with your application.**

Representatives of all members of the General Partnership and of the Community Based Organization or other entity representing the community must e-sign this document.

**NARRATIVE SECTIONS**

**Applications taking ANY points under section 4.5 must respond to sections 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5**

1. Community Based Organization Qualification
2. Internal Preparation (Developer/Sponsor Organization)
3. Identifying Community
4. Approaching Community
5. Establishing Relationships

**Applications taking points under section 4.5.2 “CBO Inclusion” must respond to section 6:**

1. Partnering With a Community Based Organization

**Applications taking points under section 4.5.3 “Meaningful Community Engagement” must respond to sections 7, 8, 9 and 10:**

1. Community Engagement Process
2. Planning Community Engagement
3. Establishing Goals of Engagement
4. Implementing Community Input
5. **Community Based Organization Qualification**

*If the Developer/Sponsor Organization is applying for points as a Community Based Organization (CBO) itself, this element of the narrative must be used to describe the specific aspects of your organization that qualify you as a CBO. If you are partnering with a CBO, please describe that organization. If more than one CBO is participating (e.g. one in an ownership capacity, another as a community engagement partner), please submit a narrative for each and indicate the roles.*

* 1. What is the Community Based Organization (CBO) or other community group you are primarily engaging with, and how are they qualified to represent the Communities Most Impacted (CMI(s))\*? Respond with a narrative including:
     + Description of the CBO’s history, mission or purpose, and connection to the identified CMI(s)
     + Identification and description of what leadership and/or advisory roles persons with **lived experience\*** in the identified CMI(s) have in the CBO, including two or more of the following:
       - A paid leadership position, list position (if applicable);
       - A member of the board (if applicable);
       - A paid staff position (if applicable);
       - An advisory role, such as serving on an advisory committee;
       - Other meaningful role, such as a volunteer (describe)
     + A descriptive list of the CBO’s previous activities related to the identified CMI(s) and community development. If there have been no previous activities, please describe who formed the CBO and why and how the CBO will function during the project.
     + A description of the proximity\* of the decision makers at the organization (top leadership and board) to on-the-ground work in the community.

**Enter Response to Section 1 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Internal Preparation (Developer/Sponsor Organization)**
   1. Describe the process your organization went through to clarify how your development staff think about the community you are approaching, and how this exercise affected the current community engagement efforts. Include:
      * Implicit Biases\*
      * Explicit Biases (diversity among staff, leadership)
      * Stereotypes
      * Past experiences, good and bad

**Enter Response to Section 2 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Identifying Community**
   1. Describe the identity- and/or geography-based community that you are engaging with on this project, including:
      * Why this community was chosen
      * The process, research, and sources used to arrive at this decision
   2. Describe where you are in the community engagement process at the time of application, including:
      * Relationships with individual community leaders or organizations already established
      * Activities already conducted and a brief description of the results
      * The recommended guides or methods you have used
      * Input the community has had on the proposed development to date

**Enter Response to Section 3 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Approaching Community**
   1. Describe the process you used to find the answers to the following questions, along with the answers themselves.
      * What Community(ies) Most Impacted\* (CMI) are found within this community?
      * What barriers do they face in accessing basic needs, services and opportunities?
      * What institutions and other community organizations exist within or in support of this community?
      * Are there any additional stakeholders in the community who will not be living in this development who you should establish a relationship with?

**Enter Response to Section 4 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Establishing Relationships**
   1. What is your organization’s previous relationship with this community?
   2. What would you like your relationship with the community to look like by the time construction is completed on this development?
   3. How will you hold your organization accountable to the community you are entering, for maintaining the relationship you’re forging, and for fulfilling promises you’re making?

**Enter Response to Section 5 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Partnering With a Community Based Organization**
   1. If you are taking points for **section 4.5.2 (CBO Inclusion**), please describe the following:
      * Financial Benefits the CBO will receive as a result of this partnership.
      * Service being provided by the CBO that is valuable to community as determined by the community.
      * Non-financial benefits the CBO will receive as a result of this partnership.

**Enter Response to Section 6 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Community Engagement Process**

*WSHFC* ***strongly recommends*** *that, if you are not a CBO, that you partner with a Community Based Organization (CBO) to lead the community engagement process.*

* 1. If you are taking points for **section 4.5.3 (Meaningful Community Engagement**), please describe the following:
     + Your relationship with the CBO you’re partnering with for the community engagement process.
     + The process by which you chose the CBO.
     + The CBO’s geographic and cultural and/or identity-based ties to the community with which you are engaging (include the individuals actually doing the work).
     + How the CBO is being compensated\*.
  2. If you do not plan to work with a CBO to conduct your Community Engagement process, please provide a personal statement from the consultant or staff member who will be leading the process. It should include:
     + previous community engagement work
     + lived experience in a community reflective of the community to be engaged.
     + demonstrated commitment to antiracism\*

**Enter Response to Section 7 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Planning Engagement**

*Refer to the following descriptive rubric. Your engagement plan should include at least some activities in the Involve, Collaborate, and/or Empower stages (details on these stages are found in the Community Engagement Toolkits)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | INFORM | CONSULT | INVOLVE | COLLABORATE | EMPOWER |
| PROMISE | We will keep you informed about this project. | We will listen to you and incorporate your feedback into our project. | We will ensure your concerns and needs are reflected in our project. | We will work with you in planning all aspects of this project. | We will implement the project designed by you. |
| PURPOSE | One-way Communication  One interaction | Primarily one-way communication  One or more interactions  Short-to-medium term | Two-way communication  Multiple Interactions  Medium-to-long term | Two-way communication  Multiple Interactions  Medium-to-long term | Two-way communication  Multiple Interactions  Medium-to-long term |
| METHODS | Town halls  Community Meetings  Media  Social Media  Materials  Web | Focus Groups  Interviews  Surveys  Stakeholder Groups | Advisory Groups  Steering Committees  Community Conversations | Collective Impact  Coalition Building  Partnership Building | Community Immersion  Community Mobilization |

* 1. In your narrative, describe your planned engagement process, answering the following:
     + How will you ensure that your process will be accessible\*?
     + What outreach methods will you use to solicit community input?
     + What is the timeline of your engagement process?
     + How will you communicate to the community how the information you are collecting from them will be used?
     + What barriers could prevent the community from participating in the feedback process? How will you break down these barriers?
     + What barriers have you experienced in engaging with community or with a CBO in the past? How will you break down those barriers?
     + How will you support your CBO partner during the community engagement process?
     + What is your budget for the community engagement process? How will it be used?
     + How will your relationship with the community continue beyond the lease-up phase?

**Enter Response to Section 8 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Establishing Goals of Engagement**
   1. Establishing what a successful community engagement process looks like is an important anchor to guide activities and keep the big picture in sight when flexibility\* is required. Use both quantitative and qualitative measures when describing the following:
      * The community’s goals for the engagement process
      * Your goals for the engagement process
      * Shared goals for the engagement process
   2. In your narrative, provide a plan for establishing the **project decisions** that will be made in collaboration with the community. Decisions should be:
      * Feasible within the project timeline.
      * Considered with full budget transparency.
   3. How will you arrive at the list of decision points?
   4. How will you engage the community in a way that ensures they are informed and empowered for decisions in which they have input (for example, choosing one priority over another, working within a budget)?

**Enter Response to Section 9 here (no limit on length):**

1. **Implementing Community Input**
   1. Describe your plan for incorporating the decisions reached in collaboration with the community into the project. Depending on where you are in the engagement process at the time of application, you may be describing actual decisions that resulted from community input, or a plan for how you will implement decisions when they are made.
      * How much is budgeted for elements prioritized by the community?
      * How will you be held accountable for implementing the decisions?
   2. If a service provider has been or will be contracted to operate within the development, please describe the entity (or type of entity, if none has yet been named) and its connection to the CMI you have identified.
      * Why was this service selected as one that the CMI values?

**Enter Response to Section 10 here (no limit on length):**

**TERMS- Definitions and Explanations**

**Harm**: When entering a community for the first time, good intentions are not enough to prevent an organization from doing harm against residents. Ill-informed or insincere engagement can cause far more harm than declining to enter a community in the first place. In order to practice engagement in a way that reduces the chance of harm, heed the following principles:

* Enter with humility: ask for permission to enter and engage, and understand that the engagement process is for you to understand what the needs of the community are, not the other way around.
* Educate yourself on the history of culture and the history of harm in the community you are entering
* Be prepared to listen, and to earn and keep trust
* Be honest about intentions and goals at every step of the way
* Work with a trusted partner who is rooted in the community of interest to help develop relationships in the community

**Accessibility**is a key factor to consider when designing a community engagement process that fits the needs and culture of the community you are developing in. Accessible outreach methods will accommodate the unique needs of the community you are developing and will support and increase participation in the feedback process. This can include providing outreach materials in non-English languages present in the community, providing on-site childcare services during community engagement events, providing on-site interpreters during community events, holding meetings in ADA compliant locations, providing food and beverages, providing transportation or transportation vouchers to attend events, providing remote options so that people can participate from home, providing anonymous feedback options for community members, and compensating community members for their participation in the process.

**Community(ies) Most Impacted:** Geographic- and/or identity-based groups who face racial discrimination and economic or historic barriers to participation in the development and displacement process.

There are three steps organizations can use to identify CMI(s). First, set physical boundaries and identify the geographic space. Second, identify the different communities that exist in that space at present or who have existed there historically, and educate yourself on their history. What cultural ties do they have? What barriers do they face when attempting to fulfill their basic needs? For communities who have been displaced and no longer occupy the same geographic space, what factors contributed to their displacement? Finally, ask which communities have the most "ownership" (who has historically lived in this geographic space) but lack the most "leverage" to respond to issues of interest (who has been or will be displaced because they lack resources to become homeowners? Who has historically lacked negotiating power when responding to development?). These steps should be conducted with a CBO partner who represents the community of interest.

**Lived Experience** Lived experience is personal knowledge about the world gained by identifying as a member of the affected group, either currently or at some point in the past.

A community representative with lived experience should be from the geographic and/or cultural community your development is in, and/or share characteristics such as racial identity, gender identity, class, ability, or sexual orientation. They have ties to the community that you are preparing to enter, and they can serve as a liaison who fairly represents the needs of the community, particularly if that community has been historically marginalized.

**Proximity** How connected organizational decision makers are to the on-the-ground experience of the community. The community should have the final say in defining proximity on a case-by-case basis for developers who are not partnering with a CBO.

**Implicit bias** Implicit Bias, also known as hidden bias, refers to the numerous ways in which we organize patterns thus creating real-world implications. Exposure to structural and cultural racism has enabled stereotypes and biases to penetrate deep into our psyches. Implicit bias is one part of the system of inequity that serves to justify racist policies, practices and behaviors that persist in mainstream culture and narratives[[1]](#endnote-1). Your team can take an implicit bias test here: [Take a Test (harvard.edu)](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html)

**Antiracism** Antiracism works against racist institutions, systems and actions to promote racial equity. Antiracism states that true race neutral policies do not exist; racism is systemic and institutional, therefore, policies can only sustain or dismantle the racist status quo. They cannot act outside of it.

Dr. Ibram X. Kendi defines antiracist as “One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea….an antiracist policy is any policy that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups.”

It is not enough to be simply “not racist” to achieve racial justice and equity; organizations and individuals must be “antiracist.”

*For more information on this topic, consider reading Dr. Kendi’s book, How to be an Antiracist*

**Disparities** Housing disparities are a form of economic inequality where the quantity and quality of available housing is insufficient to meet the needs of an entire population. This results in insufficient housing options for low- and extremely low-income populations, disproportionately borne by people of color and other underserved groups, who face additional barriers to accessing basic needs and services.

This economic inequality is compounded by inequitable access to opportunities for developing generational wealth which includes historic discriminatory housing practices such as redlining and racial covenants. These practices were used by private and public institutions to prevent BIPOC communities specifically from acquiring financial assets. The stolen labor and subsequent wealth accumulated in previous generations by BIPOC communities continues to benefit white institutions, which perpetuate racial inequities today.

**Flexibility** The engagement plan that your organization develops with a CBO partner may need to be adjusted to accommodate the feedback and needs of community members. The process of being responsive and accountable to community feedback is more important than adhering to a predetermined outreach schedule. By prioritizing the needs of the community and adjusting your approach based on their feedback, your engagement process can support the creation of a sustainable relationship built on trust and accountability.

**Fair Compensation** You need to compensate your community partner fairly for the insight they have earned through their professional lives and lived experience. Fair compensation, and negotiation with integrity demonstrates respect. This includes clarifying if your initial consultation with them is paid. Fair compensation also includes providing cash and/or other resources to community members who give their time and energy to provide input during the community engagement process.

1. From “Racial Equity Tools” [About | Racial Equity Tools](https://www.racialequitytools.org/about) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)