Fostering Inclusive and Effective Community Engagement with PlanRVA

avid core

In 2021, PlanRVA made a public commitment to put equity at the center of its community engagement efforts and decision making. To make progress with this important commitment, Avid Core was brought in to create the agency's first Community Engagement Strategy and Implementation Plan.

Avid Core's approach was rooted in feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders, including local tribes, community groups, and minority-owned businesses. Using the information gathered, Avid Core created a comprehensive strategy that outlined a set of concrete, measurable goals, identified key stakeholder groups and messages for each, prioritized communications and outreach tactics for achieving the new goals, and defined roles and responsibilities for practical implementation.

Implementation is in its early phases, but the new strategy has already allowed PlanRVA to successfully lobby for a budget increase and to gain approval from its Board of Commissioners for the creation of a new Community Engagement Manager position.

Avid Core's data-driven approach also offered a foundation for new community partnerships to expand PlanRVA's reach and impact with historically underserved populations. PlanRVA staff are using the conversations started during the assessment phase to build new relationships.

The final strategy created by Avid Core provides PlanRVA with a framework for the future that prioritizes inclusive community engagement efforts, both internally and externally.

PlanRVA Community Engagement Strategy

July 2021

PlanRVA THE REGIONAL COMMISSION

Historically Underserved Populations
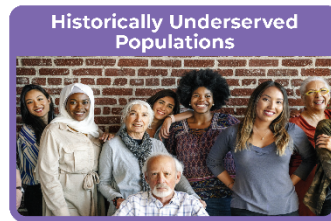
Key Demographics
- The average percentage of minority population in Richmond region was 4.4 percent in 2017 and the total minority population is 440,000. Black or African American makes up 300,000, which is 70 percent of the total minority population. Hispanic or Latino is the second largest minority population group with 65,000 people, or 15 percent of the total.
- The percentage of persons with at least one disability is around 11.8% for the region. Of the 121,000 persons with a disability, 90% live in Chesterfield County, Henrico County and Richmond City.
- The total LEP population in the Richmond region is around 21,000, or 2.1% of the total population. The majority of LEP individuals reside in Chesterfield County, Henrico County and Richmond City.

Key Characteristics/Takeaways
- People are looking for their interests in the various visions presented. Must understand why participation matters to get participation.
- People care about where they live and future of their specific communities. They must understand how PlanRVA's work might impact them.

Opportunities
- Establish proactive and ongoing communication. A representative slice of the community cannot be engaged without building trust and a good reputation over time.
- Close the feedback loop so community members understand how participation works and how their feedback is used in PlanRVA processes.
- Create community ambassadors and champions to encourage feedback and widen PlanRVA's reach.

Challenges
- Most community members do not know PlanRVA exists.
- There is not a homogenous and collaborative culture across the region. One size will not fit all.
- There is a large undocumented population. PlanRVA must make their safety a priority if they want their participation.
- Translation needs.

Preferred Channels
- Community Partnerships
- Churches and libraries
- Local news and radio, particularly non-English language outlets

Preferred Content Types
- Translated and accessible materials
- Plain language
- Social media
- Newsletters from community partners

Capabilities

Key Message Development

Media Relations

Strategy Development

Audience Identification

Social Media Management

Public Outreach

Outreach Material Development