



HOW CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS CAN ENGAGE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Contractors are crucial partners in building safe and healthy communities, yet much of the planning of new projects happens before the contractor is engaged. AGC and its members have discussed the importance of developing a relationship and garnering understanding from the community as early as possible (or irreparable project issues may emerge), and the need for contractors to be included earlier on in the engagement process to fully partner with the owner on recurrent opportunities to share information, solicit feedback, and celebrate progress. Below are some opportunities for community engagement that they have identified.

1. **Engage early.** In discussions with members, a key finding arose: oftentimes, by the time the contractor is involved in a project, it is too late for them to be a valuable partner to the owner in community engagement and community expectation setting. While the construction process, and at what point a contractor becomes involved in it, is complex and varies, the earlier a contractor is involved, the better.
2. **Build relationships first.**
 - An initial first step for contractors to enhance engagement is getting involved in the communities where you perform work outside the scope of a project, for example, Earth Day events, job fairs, parades, festivals, mentoring, park clean-up days, community gardens, and other community events.
 - Form relationships with community groups and leaders and listen to their goals, objectives, and needs for the community.
3. **Be proactive in education and expectation setting.**
 - As soon as possible, in coordination with the owner, ask about the community's concerns related to a project, discuss how these concerns may impact the project and how the contractor can help.
 - Be as proactive as possible in explaining the construction process, schedule, benefits, and impacts to the community to get ahead of potential problems.
4. **Bring in the experts.** Consider bringing in a third-party community engagement organization to help mediate and build trust and relationships on sensitive projects. The traditional means of public outreach may not be the best way to engage with disadvantaged communities. In these cases, project proponents may need to bring in experts to help reach out to these communities and provide a forum for participation.
5. **Reduce impacts on the community.** Take steps to reduce impacts on the community by anticipating concerns that could be associated with the project (e.g., educate frequently on any necessary remediation and safeguards for the community); be a good neighbor; organize community days and hold regular public meetings during the project.