

# PlanRVA Community Engagement Strategy

July 2021



# Table of Contents

## PlanRVA Community Engagement Strategy

- Introduction..... 1
- PlanRVA’s Community Engagement Mission, Vision, and Values ..... 1
- Goals and Objectives..... 2
- Key Stakeholders and Messages..... 3
- Community Engagement Roles and Responsibilities ..... 9
- Tactics ..... 9
- Performance Metrics..... 12

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Per Project - Community Engagement Plan Checklist..... 13
- Appendix B: Audience Profiles ..... 14
- Appendix C: PlanRVA Community Engagement Roles and Responsibilities ..... 26
- Appendix D: Richmond Region Community Events..... 31
- Appendix E: Tactics – Pricing Breakdown ..... 32
- Appendix F: Assessment Report..... 43

## Introduction

PlanRVA is committed to putting equity at the center of its community engagement efforts and decision making. In order to make progress with this important commitment, a conscious effort and resources must be allocated to engaging all community members in a way that is accessible and results in useful feedback for the agency.

PlanRVA's Community Engagement Strategy is rooted in feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders, including local tribes, community groups, and minority-owned businesses (see [Appendix F: Assessment Report](#)). It provides a framework for the future that prioritizes inclusive community engagement efforts, both internally and externally.

This strategy is designed to be a concise internal reference, with much of the background information included by reference in our assessment report or as an appendix to this strategy. PlanRVA's Community Engagement Strategy is intended to be a living document that is updated annually as described or more frequently as needed.

---

## PlanRVA's Community Engagement Mission, Vision, and Values

### Our Mission: Partnering to enable meaningful outcomes for our Region

PlanRVA promotes regional cooperation and collaboration between government, private sector, and community to improve the quality of life for all people who live, work, and play in the Richmond Region.

---

### Our Vision: Better together

Our work will foster inclusion, allowing every member of the public to provide input into the future of the Richmond Region.

---

### Our Values:

- **Think big picture**

We prioritize projects and planning efforts based on the needs of the community and must create ways for the community to share these needs.

- **Facilitate change**

The best plans come from regional collaboration and meaningful engagement with the people who will be most impacted.

- **Continuously learning**

We do not speak on behalf of impacted community members. We provide opportunities for people to speak, comment, and engage for themselves.

- **Promote representation**

Known barriers to community engagement and public participation should be mitigated or eliminated through our processes.

---

## 3

### Goals and Objectives

PlanRVA has identified the following goals for its Fiscal Year 2022 community engagement efforts.

**Goal #1: Increase awareness of PlanRVA and foster an understanding of the organization’s work and role.**

Impressions of PlanRVA by external stakeholders ranged from positive, with the potential to improve, to non-existent or unaware. Several internal stakeholder survey respondents reflected that many Richmond Region community members are not aware of PlanRVA and its work. They added that, within their communities and network, PlanRVA and its affiliated agencies, such as the Richmond Region Transportation Planning Organization or Central Virginia Emergency Management Alliance, are often conflated because there are not always clear distinctions between the agencies. Additionally, PlanRVA’s role as a regional convener on successful projects is not always recognized by members of the public or the media.

- Increase perception of successful engagement among internal stakeholders—move majority of responses to Likert scale question, “To what extent do you believe that PlanRVA has succeeded in engaging the public?” from 2/3s to 4/5s.
- Increase membership of public engagement committee by 100% to include community representatives.
- Track the number of press mentions with a goal of receiving 30 mentions a quarter.
- Increase in number of followers on social media accounts by 100% with a goal of achieving 3,000 followers in three years to mirror other regional planning bodies and other organizations serving the greater Richmond Region.
- Track the number of PlanRVA webpage visitors to establish a baseline number of website users.

**Goal #2: Increase participation in PlanRVA comment processes and ensure respondents are representative of the Richmond Region.**

The Richmond Region has a population of 1.1 million. It is 59% white, 28% black, 6% Latino or Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 3% other, including 0.2% Native American and Alaskan Natives.

PlanRVA has not tracked metrics, including demographic information, related to public comment respondents but, anecdotally, most comments have come from technical experts.

- Track the number of respondents from non-white and limited English proficient communities with an ideal of at least 30 percent of all respondents for each comment period to reflect representative demographics of the Richmond Region.
- Establish ongoing partnerships with Tribal Nations and community groups that serve a representative population of the nine localities.

### **Goal #3: Increase community collaboration**

Many external stakeholders and several survey respondents referenced a perception that they and, in their opinion, others in the community have of Richmond's regional disconnectedness, particularly between the City of Richmond, its neighboring counties, and Richmond Region community-based organizations. External stakeholders and survey respondents elaborated that this perceived disconnectedness served as a hinderance in facilitating regional innovation and addressing regional issues.

PlanRVA currently features 19 representatives from local governments and community groups in its ongoing "Better Together" webinar series.

- Establish ongoing partnerships with community groups that serve a representative population of the nine localities.
- Track participation in non-PlanRVA-hosted events.
- Track engagement, comments, and shares on all PlanRVA social media channels.

### **Goal #4: Increase awareness among PlanRVA staff on unconscious bias in existing community engagement practices and mitigate to the greatest extent possible.**

- Train 100% of PlanRVA staff in unconscious bias and the impacts to engagement results when biases are left unchecked.

## **4**

## **Key Stakeholders and Messages**

PlanRVA has identified the following stakeholder groups as target audiences. Each group has a different level of familiarity with PlanRVA and each group will require different resources, messaging, and tactics to reach PlanRVA's goals.

See more detailed Audience Profiles in [Appendix B](#).

### **General Messages**

- PlanRVA is the primary organization that connects the nine localities in the Greater Richmond area. This leading planning partnership develops solutions to enhance economic growth, reduce

traffic delays and congestion, improve sustainability, increase safety and deliver efficiency and cost effectiveness in the Richmond Region.

- The Richmond Region is interconnected. Planning from a regional perspective ensures the best outcomes beyond jurisdictional borders.
- As a regional convener, PlanRVA provides a forum for you to collaborate, network, and share with local leaders and community members.
- The best plans come from meaningful regional collaboration and engagement.
- PlanRVA puts equity at the center of our work. We are committed to creating equitable opportunities and supporting all of our communities to meet our region’s future needs.
- Our region is rapidly growing with more than 1,000,000 people living in urban, suburban and rural communities spanning 2,165 miles. PlanRVA is dedicated to developing future-focused, innovative and holistic plans to address our diverse citizens’ needs for transportation, safety and sustainability.
- As a commerce and transit hub, PlanRVA forms partnerships to design efficient multimodal transportation solutions to improve efficiency, capacity, and safety in the Richmond region.

Stakeholder	Audience Overview	Key Messages
<p><b>Local Government (Staff and Officials)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA is the only place where elected officials from all nine localities come together. Their high-level of engagement presents both a challenge and an opportunity.</li> <li>• Elected officials from the nine localities serve on PlanRVA's Board of Commissioners, as well as the RRTPO Policy Board, and various committees for PlanRVA-supported programming. Engaging these stakeholders goes beyond public outreach and into the decision-making process.</li> <li>• Elected officials understand the dynamics and nuances of their local communities.</li> <li>• There is a perception that there is no clear champion for regional collaboration from this group of individuals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA is the Richmond Region’s convener and can provide ideas and resources to share among your jurisdictions.</li> <li>• The Richmond Region is interconnected. PlanRVA helps the local governments make decisions that improve their own jurisdictions while benefitting the region as a whole.</li> <li>• PlanRVA provides opportunities to hear from your stakeholders, so you can better understand needs to improve your local communities and work together on interconnected issues.</li> <li>• This collaborative forum offers knowledge sharing, identification of regional safety, environmental, and transportation concerns.</li> <li>• PlanRVA connects all levels (local, state and federal) of government to develop regional solutions.</li> <li>• PlanRVA can be a liaison to the private and philanthropic sectors to promote multi-sector cooperation in key regional priority areas.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Tribal Nations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognized Tribal Nations in the Richmond Region include Chickahominy Tribe, Chickahominy Tribe - Eastern Division, and the Pamunkey Tribe.</li> <li>• The Tribes in the Richmond area faced a long battle to federal recognition. There is a long history of distrust with government agencies and public bodies.</li> <li>• There is a strong interest in participation and collaboration, but the resources are not always available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA values the perspective of Tribal Nations and the protection of tribal cultural resources.</li> <li>• The Richmond Region is interconnected. PlanRVA helps Tribal Nations be a part of decisions that can benefit their tribes and the whole region while protecting resources.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Special Interest Groups</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special interest groups have specific goals that may or may not align with PlanRVA, but they are often highly engaged.</li> <li>• These groups know to turn to the official channels, attend meetings, and participate in public comment periods.</li> <li>• They are primarily interested in advocating for their organization's specific agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA wants to work with your organization to ensure all community members are represented in our public processes.</li> <li>• PlanRVA values the input of all stakeholders and wants to work to provide accessible information for you and your constituency.</li> <li>• PlanRVA's partnerships are integral to implementing critically needed improvements in order to increase the efficiency of the region's infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for residents.</li> <li>• PlanRVA is responsible for balancing the interests of all stakeholders in the Richmond Region.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community-based Organizations (includes, churches, houses of worship, civic organizations, food banks, childcare centers, shelters, and small businesses)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based organizations are a trusted source of information for the public, especially historically underserved communities.</li> <li>• These organizations are passionate about community issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive outreach and engagement is a part of who we are and we design equitable opportunities for input into planning. PlanRVA wants to work with your organization to ensure all community members are represented in our public processes.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community-based Organizations (includes churches, houses of worship, civic organizations, food banks, childcare centers, shelters, and small businesses)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is some engagement with PlanRVA, but could be more involved.</li> <li>• Sometimes these organizations are under resourced (staff, budget).</li> <li>• These organizations are committed to and enjoy meaningful partnerships.</li> <li>• They can provide influential and engaging channels of communication. These groups are often a source of community leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too often, the community we serve does not give input into the plans and projects that will shape their local community; PlanRVA wants to work with community-based organizations like you to change this and make sure everyone has a voice.</li> <li>• PlanRVA provides opportunities to give everyone across the nine localities the chance to collaborate and share ideas on local transportation, environmental, and emergency management issues.</li> <li>• PlanRVA encourages organizations to participate and share your comments, ideas, and solutions with PlanRVA. Together, we will work to improve our local community with the full region in mind.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local Business Owners</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Top 20 employers in the Richmond Region employ 20% of the working population.</li> <li>• The Richmond Region is home to an array of industries and seven Fortune 500 headquarters, including DuPont's largest manufacturing plant in the world.</li> <li>• Local businesses are interested in economic development, forming prosperous partnerships, hiring a diverse workforce and ensuring planning drives growth.</li> <li>• The impact of PlanRVA's work has not been well communicated to the business community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can advance the economic development of the Richmond Region by participating in PlanRVA planning processes.</li> <li>• People and goods cross jurisdictional boundaries every day. Planning at the regional level is crucial for the Richmond Region's economic health.</li> <li>• Transportation infrastructure is often cited as one of the Richmond area's key advantages for businesses. Work with PlanRVA to keep this advantage for the future.</li> <li>• PlanRVA supports growing the local job force to boost the local economy.</li> <li>• We encourage small businesses to partner with PlanRVA to provide input, discover resources, and learn about new solicitations.</li> </ul>



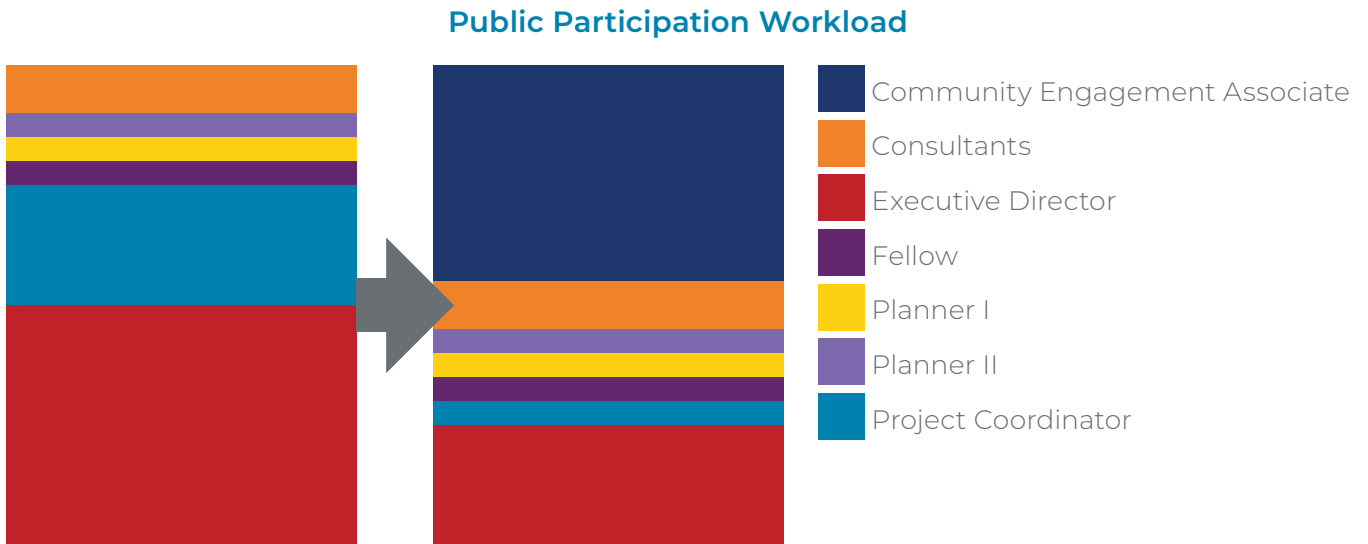
<p><b>K-12 Students</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are new to civic engagement and public processes.</li> <li>• They may not grasp technical terms.</li> <li>• Students are the future workforce and leaders of the Richmond Region.</li> <li>• Students can be a channel to reach parents and other family members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA listens to what people in the Richmond area want in their communities. Whether it is where to put a playground, how to protect the environment, or when the bus comes—everyone gets to contribute their ideas.</li> <li>• It can take a long time to implement all of the great ideas from people around the region. As you get older, you will see the benefits of the work PlanRVA does throughout your community.</li> <li>• PlanRVA helps keep people safe by developing plans to protect people in an emergency.</li> <li>• We encourage people of all ages to get involved and learn more about our region’s unique planning efforts.</li> <li>• Your family, friends, and you can be involved by providing your ideas or becoming a planner when you grow up!</li> </ul>
<p><b>Young adults 18-25, college and university students</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young adults are often more passionate about national issues than local issues.</li> <li>• College students do not always feel connected to the Richmond Region as many are temporary residents.</li> <li>• Students are interested in building experience to become more desirable as a job candidate.</li> <li>• Students can be less engaged with PlanRVA and its feedback process on projects and plans.</li> <li>• Students often rely on public transit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA’s work helps ensure the Richmond Region is a fun place to live and advance your career.</li> <li>• PlanRVA offers an internship program for you to do work with an impact in the community.</li> <li>• We want to hear your transportation and safety needs. Your ideas and feedback matter and will help shape your community and the future of the greater Richmond region.</li> </ul>

<b>Colleges and University Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 29 colleges/ universities in the Richmond Region.</li> <li>• Schools are a trusted source of information, especially for young adults.</li> <li>• Schools provide great opportunities for impactful community engagement.</li> <li>• Higher education institutions are interested in providing opportunities for students to grow professionally and interested in regional growth to attract students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PlanRVA's work can have an impact on student recruitment to the area and local hiring pipelines. The higher education community's involvement in planning processes will keep these factors in mind as we plan for the future.</li> <li>• PlanRVA works with higher education organizations to conduct research, share the latest industry trends and develop comprehensive plans to shape our region's future.</li> <li>• PlanRVA recognizes the important contributions of our institutions of higher learning in the community and believes in the opportunity to leverage all assets to increase engagement and leverage college and university capital.</li> </ul>
<b>Historically Underserved Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most community members do not know PlanRVA exists.</li> <li>• Often times these communities have limited resources that impact ability to participate.</li> <li>• Community members are passionate about community issues, especially when they have a direct impact on their livelihood.</li> <li>• Communities typically trust their social networks (family, friends, loved ones, community groups, faith-based organizations).</li> <li>• These groups can be vocal about issues, but often their voices are not heard and they are marginalized.</li> <li>• Some community members may not grasp technical terms, depending on level of education and English proficiency.</li> <li>• Some members of these populations may not have access to internet or feel comfortable online but can often be reached on mobile phones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too often, the community we serve does not give input into the plans and projects that will shape their local community; PlanRVA wants to change this and make sure everyone has a voice.</li> <li>• The future of transportation, emergency preparedness, and sustainability in your local community can improve when you participate.</li> <li>• PlanRVA wants to hear from you. You are encouraged to share concerns and ideas to improve the Richmond Region.</li> <li>• PlanRVA strives to ensure that our work reflects the diverse thoughts and interests of citizens in our region. We offer multiple ways to provide input. If you're not able to attend a public meeting, we invite you to call, email, send a letter or submit a request to speak at a community event.</li> <li>• PlanRVA offers free resources to help you prepare for emergencies ranging from power outages to natural disasters.</li> </ul>
<b>Ethnic and racial minorities</b>		
<b>People who are socioeconomically disadvantaged</b>		
<b>People with disabilities and others with access and functional needs</b>		
<b>Undocumented population</b>		
<b>Older adults 75+</b>		
<b>LGBTQ+</b>		
<b>Limited English Proficiency</b>		

5

## Community Engagement Roles and Responsibilities

A commitment to inclusive community engagement will require dedicated resources (see more in [Appendix F: Assessment Report](#)). The following chart visualizes where community engagement responsibilities within the current staff and future staffing should a Community Engagement Manager be hired.



[Appendix C](#) outlines the current roles staff plays in community engagement efforts and how those roles should shift in accordance with the strategy and the hiring of a full-time Community Engagement Manager.

A job description for the Community Engagement Manager can be found in [Appendix C](#).

6

## Tactics

The following tactics can be employed over the next fiscal year to meet the identified measurable goals.

Tactics vary in terms of cost and time investments. See [Appendix E](#) for specific activities and hours and cost estimates.

These tactics were evaluated in May and June 2021. As more data is collected throughout the year, the priorities and effectiveness may change. Including an evaluation period and allowing flexibility to shift tactics based on new information is a best practice that should be adopted by PlanRVA.

Tactic	Goal #1: Increase awareness of PlanRVA	Goal #2: Increase representative participation in PlanRVA comment processes	Goal #3: Increase community collaboration	Goal #4: Increase awareness among PlanRVA staff on unconscious bias
Social Media	X	X	X	X
Meetings	X	X	X	X
Events	X	X	X	
Media Outreach	X	X		
Videos	X	X		X
Partnerships	X		X	
Email Newsletter	X	X		
Website	X	X		X
Mobile Outreach	X	X		
Mail	X	X	X	X
Participation Incentives		X	X	
Staff Trainings	X	X		X

### Social Media

Social media can be a powerful tool for sharing information and building community. To be effective, social media activities must go beyond one-way posting and include mechanisms for dialogue and partnership.

### PlanRVA-hosted Meetings

PlanRVA has already made a number of commitments to improving access and participation at PlanRVA-hosted meetings in its [Public Engagement Plan](#). These meetings should be planned in a way that factors in inclusivity from the start.

### Meetings Hosted by Other Organizations

Part of meeting people where they are means going to meetings they might already be planning to attend. This can expand PlanRVA's reach, as well as build stronger relationships with the leaders of local governments and community-based organizations.

### Community Events

Community events are another great way to meet people where they are and to show support to community partners.

## **Media Outreach**

PlanRVA should be seen as a leader and trusted source in the region. Many stakeholders noted the media, particularly non-traditional outlets, as a primary way they get information.

## **Videos**

More video content is being consumed than ever before. Videos are a great way to offer context around PlanRVA's public processes and to put visuals and human faces on impacts to communities.

## **Partner Outreach**

Strong partnerships will expand PlanRVA's reach and build credibility with target audiences. Partnerships should be ongoing efforts throughout the year.

## **Website**

PlanRVA's website has made many improvements with the new branding, but there are still ways to improve accessibility and to use it to its full potential.

## **Email**

The Public Engagement Plan notes the creation of an email digest after meetings and a database of stakeholders. There is an opportunity for PlanRVA to build on these initial efforts to expand community engagement.

## **Mobile Outreach**

Texting can be a successful tactic to promote actionable next steps.

## **Mail**

While digital outreach offers more data points and is typically accessible at a lower cost, physical mail offers benefits to populations without reliable internet access and for those who are less comfortable with the internet.

## **Participation Incentives**

Community members participate in public processes for a variety of reasons and incentives have been shown to increase participation, particularly among Historically Underrepresented groups and students.

## **Staff Trainings**

During internal interviews, PlanRVA staff expressed interest in training on public outreach. While most staffers are currently working at capacity and are unable to take on larger roles in community engagement, there are trainings that would help them improve current operations.

## Performance Metrics

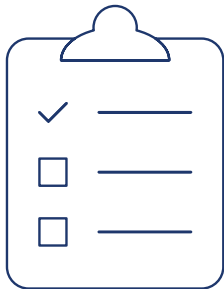
PlanRVA should regularly review the effectiveness of their outreach and update the community engagement plan accordingly. The community engagement strategy and plan should be reviewed and updated annually based on lessons learned from engagements.

Goal	Metric	How and when to measure
Increase awareness	Public knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community surveys               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Conduct community surveys annually</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Number of public comments               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Track number of substantive public comments received during comment periods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Social media followers and likes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Track social media impressions/ reach/likes metrics following community events/public comment periods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Website visits               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Track website visits following community events and throughout public comment periods</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Media coverage               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Monitor for media coverage and track mentions daily</li> <li>o Prepare media clip reports following media release or interview with reporter</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Increase representative participation	Demographics of respondents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect demographic data as part of public comment responses               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Evaluate demographics halfway through each comment period. Evaluate promotion tactics and direct resources to communities that have not responded.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Community surveys               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Conduct community surveys annually and include self-select demographic questions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Increase community collaboration	Community and partnership interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRM               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Track number of stakeholders engaged during community events and public comment periods</li> <li>o Measure partnerships by tracking number of organizations consistently engaged throughout the year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Increase awareness of unconscious bias	Staff trained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant evaluations               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Issue evaluation forms to track effectiveness of training and staff participation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Issues Addressed/Complaints Filed               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Track the number of actions needed to address discriminatory behavior and evaluate the course of action taken.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Resources and tools               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Monitor the number of page views for unconscious bias training resources</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Appendix A: Per Project - Community Engagement Plan Checklist



## Building a Project Community Engagement Plan



Building and implementing an effective community engagement strategy can be vital to the success of a project—not only does it involve raising awareness, but done well, it can generate buy-in from stakeholders and use the considerations, knowledge, and experience of the community to shape the design and implementation of the project. A comprehensive engagement plan should be informed by a deep understanding of the community and its stakeholders. As part of the process, engagement managers should:

1

Identify the goals and objectives of community engagement

Resources: Refer to the **IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation** to identify your goals for community engagement

2

Interview key internal and external stakeholders

Resources: Refer to the **Community Engagement Assessment Report and Community Engagement Strategy** for background on stakeholder interests and community engagement preferences

3

Identify your timeline and budget

Resources: Refer to the **Public Engagement Plan** for the minimum of time promised for a comment period

**Considerations that may require a longer timeline:**

1. Are you reaching out to a new community where there is no existing relationship?
2. Are Tribes involved?
3. Are translations or accessibility accommodations needed?
4. Will information be distributed by mail or through community partners?

4

Develop key messages

Resources: Refer to the **Community Engagement Strategy** for basic key messages

**Tip:** Ensure messages are written in plain language and are understandable to the general public.

**Considerations for budget:**

1. What can the Community Engagement Manager help with?
2. Are there partner organizations that can provide resources to help with community engagement?
3. Will you need to bring on a consultant to help with outreach?

5

Identify engagement tactics and communication channels

Resources: Refer to the **Community Engagement Strategy** for potential engagement tactics

**Tip:** Ensure your identified tactics are the preferred method of engagement for the community you are trying to reach.

6

Develop key performance metrics to measure success of your engagement efforts

## Appendix B: Audience Profiles

### Local Elected Government



#### Key Demographics

- Localities: Town of Ashland, Charles City County, Chesterfield County, Goochland County, Hanover County, Henrico County, New Kent County, Powhatan County, City of Richmond.
- Race/Ethnicity: Majority of elected officials across the nine localities are white.
- Age: Majority of elected officials across the nine localities are over the age of 45.
- Language: English is spoken by all elected officials across the nine localities.

#### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- PlanRVA is the only place where elected officials from all nine localities come together. Their high-level of engagement presents both a challenge and an opportunity.
- There is a perception that there is no clear champion for regional collaboration from this group of individuals.
- The demographics of representatives do not currently align with the demographics of the region.
- Elected officials understand the dynamics and nuances of their local community.

#### Opportunities

- Elected officials from the nine localities serve on PlanRVA's Board of Commissioners, as well as the RRTPO Policy Board, and various committees for PlanRVA-supported programming. Engaging these stakeholders goes beyond public outreach and into the decision-making process.
- Develop trust so all elected officials understand their constituencies are heard and supported through PlanRVA's work.

#### Challenges

- These stakeholders are charged with representing their own constituencies.
- Formality is required in interactions. Each jurisdiction has its own rules and timeline for sharing information.
- These stakeholders must be engaged early in the process as their buy-in and support is crucial.
- There is a public perception that the nine localities do not like, trust, or coordinate well with each other.

#### Preferred Channels

- Varies by locality.

#### Preferred Content Types

- Summary highlights, action items, access to full documentation
- Need to see proof of reach to constituencies.
- Need to see follow up after engagements and decisions, particularly as it comes to impacts by locality.



## Local Government Staff



### Key Demographics

- Localities: Town of Ashland, Charles City County, Chesterfield County, Goochland County, Hanover County, Henrico County, New Kent County, Powhatan County, City of Richmond.
- Support staff for the local elected officials and job titles/positions vary by locality.

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- PlanRVA is the only place where local government staff from all nine localities come together.
- Some localities are more involved and have more support than others. This variation must be considered.

### Opportunities

- Build buy-in. This group of stakeholders will be involved in implementation after decisions are made.
- These stakeholders have direct contact with community members and decision makers. They need to understand the ins and outs and feel confident sharing information.
- Utilize their unique position to increase public participation across the nine localities.

### Challenges

- This group is made up of stakeholders, as well as serves as the link to the elected officials in each jurisdiction. They need awareness at every stage.
- Each locality operates differently. This means keeping track of different timelines, preferred contacts, and information styles.

### Preferred Channels

- Varies by locality.

### Preferred Content Types

- Needs multiple types of content
  - Information to pass along to elected officials, information for citizens of the jurisdiction, and information about their staff's role in it.
- Should clearly lay out impact to their specific locality.

## Tribal Nations



### Key Demographics

- Chickahominy Tribe
- Chickahominy Tribe - Eastern Division
- Pamunkey Tribe

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Interested in sustainability, development that impacts the environment, and services that impact the wellbeing of tribal members.
- There is a strong interest in participation and collaboration from the very beginning of the planning process, but Tribal resources are not always available.
- There is an interest to ensure tribal cultural resources and history are accurately portrayed and preserved.

Photo Credit: Senator Mark Warner, [Flickr](#) CC BY 2.0

### Opportunities

- Undertake every effort to incorporate Tribal input in the planning process.
- Foster an ongoing partnership with area tribes.

### Challenges

- Project timelines need to be as long as possible to allow Tribal Nations to participate or offer feedback.
- Tribes lack the resources to respond to everything. They must prioritize and sometimes this is perceived as a lack of interest.
- The tribes in the Richmond area faced a long battle to federal recognition. There is a long history of distrust with government agencies and public bodies.
- Not all tribal members have access to Internet.

### Preferred Channels

- Local news media
- Church
- Monthly tribal meetings
- Trusted Tribal organizations/ members

### Preferred Content Types

- Email
- Phone Calls
- Facebook groups
- Mail
- Word of mouth

## Special Interest Groups



### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Some of PlanRVA's known special interest groups in the Richmond Region include Partnership for Smarter Growth, Sportsbackers, RVA Rapid Transit, and the Richmond Office of Sustainability.
- These stakeholders are in the know, but often do not feel heard.
- They know to turn to the official channels, attend meetings, and participate in public comment periods.
- Primarily interested in their organization's specific agenda.

### Opportunities

- Build partnerships of understanding. Interest groups have specific goals that may or may not align, but they should always understand the process and how to participate.
- Expand reach and brand of PlanRVA by utilizing their networks.
- Close the feedback loop when these groups participate in the process.

### Challenges

- Showing a wider impact to groups that have a narrow focus.
- Ensuring that opposition is constructive, not solely combative.

### Preferred Channels

- PlanRVA official sources
- Partnerships

### Preferred Content Types

- Website
- Newsletter
- Social media

## Community-Based Organizations



### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Community-based organizations are a trusted source of information for the public, especially historically underserved communities.
- These organizations are passionate about community issues.
- There is some engagement with PlanRVA, but they could be more involved.
- Sometimes these organizations are under resourced (staff, budget).
- These organizations are committed to and enjoy meaningful partnerships.
- They can provide influential and engaging channels of communication. These groups are often a source of community leaders.
- Committed to and enjoy meaningful partnerships.
- Hold influential channels of communication where audience is engaged.

### Opportunities

- Establish lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with Community-Based Organizations.
- Build on the work ongoing in these communities. Do not reinvent the wheel.
- Close the feedback loop so community members understand how participation in PlanRVA public engagement processes works and how their feedback is used.

### Challenges

- Most members of these organizations do not know PlanRVA exists or understand how its work impacts them.
- When information is pushed out to the public, it is highly technical and not accessible.
- There is not a homogenous and collaborative culture across the region. One size will not fit all.

### Preferred Channels

- Community events
- Partnerships
- Organization newsletters

### Preferred Content Types

- Translated and accessible materials
- Plain language with direct impacts communicated
- Easily shareable with their members

## Local Business Owners



### Key Demographics

- The Top 20 employers in the Richmond Region employ 20% of the working population.
- Education Services is the largest industry sector with over 36,000 jobs.
- The Richmond Region is home to an array of industries and seven Fortune 500 headquarters, including DuPont's largest manufacturing plant in the world.
- CityLab ranked Richmond #6 for large metro areas with the fastest growth in the creative class.

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Transportation infrastructure is often cited as one of the Richmond area's key advantages for businesses. This offers a distinct reason to work in partnership.
- Leading organizations for this population include Metropolitan Business League, Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce, Central Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Central Virginia Asian Chamber of Commerce.

### Opportunities

- PlanRVA supports economic development in the Richmond Region. Engaging the business community is crucial to this goal.
- Ensure the business community looks beyond industry or locality and into the region as a whole.
- Build partnerships with local business organizations to expand reach, liaise with businesses of all sizes and types, and confirm status as trusted source.

### Challenges

- The major business organizations in the Richmond Region have not been able to easily share or promote PlanRVA services/offerings/engagement opportunities to their memberships. There is a disconnect.
- The impact of PlanRVA's work has not been well communicated to the business community.
- Attending public meetings can be difficult for local business owners.

### Preferred Channels

- Media reports (radio, TV, podcasts)
- Social media via organizations

### Preferred Content Types

- Condensed and simple with a clear impact
- Text message campaigns
- Social media posts
- Email

## K-12 Students



### Key Demographics

- There are about 180,000 K-12 students enrolled in schools across the Richmond Region.
- The Richmond Region had 286 schools; 211 public schools and 75 private schools as of 2017.
- PlanRVA has existing partnerships with the Community Foundation of Greater Richmond, Chesterfield Education Foundation, Henrico Education Foundation, and Richmond Public Schools Education Foundation.

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Students are new to civic engagement and public processes.
- Students are the future workforce and leaders of the Richmond Region.

### Opportunities

- Students can be a channel to reach parents and other family members.
- Build upon existing education efforts and partnerships in the region.

### Challenges

- They may not grasp technical terms.
- This is a long-term investment in the future of the region.

### Preferred Channels

- Workshops
- Grade-level appropriate curriculum
- Partnerships

### Preferred Content Types

- School newsletters
- School social media
- Videos

## Young Adults 18-25, College and University Students



### Key Demographics

- There are about 76,000 students enrolled in colleges and universities in the Richmond Region.
- 29 Colleges/Universities are located in the Richmond Region

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- College students do not always feel connected to the Richmond Region as many are temporary residents.
- Students are interested in building experience to become more desirable as a job candidate.
- Students can often rely on public transit.

### Opportunities

- PlanRVA offers an internship program for you to do work with an impact in the community.
- Engage a younger demographic in public processes through campus partnerships.
- Teach the role and responsibility of PlanRVA.

### Challenges

- Students can be less engaged with PlanRVA and its feedback process on projects and plans.
- Young adults are often more passionate about national issues than local issues.

### Preferred Channels

- Campus partnerships – Student organizations, Sororities/Fraternities
- Campus news sources
- Campus events

### Preferred Content Types

- Social media
- Videos
- Short and digestible
- Clear impact shown

## Higher Education – Staff and Administration



### Key Demographics

- 29 Colleges/Universities are located in the Richmond Region
- VA Commonwealth University is a top employer in the region.

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Schools are a trusted source of information, especially for young adults.
- Schools provide great opportunities for impactful community engagement.
- PlanRVA has a strong existing relationship with VCU.

### Opportunities

- Build partnerships with colleges/universities for research and outreach.
- Higher education institutions are interested in providing opportunities for students to grow professionally and interested in regional growth to attract students.

### Challenges

- PlanRVA does not have existing relationships with local HBCUs.
- It can be difficult to understand the best point of contact for schools, programs, etc. that fall under a college/university umbrella.

### Preferred Channels

- Official sources
- Networking groups

### Preferred Content Types

- Email
- Website
- Partnerships



## Historically Underserved Populations



### Key Demographics

- The average percentage of minority population in Richmond region was 41.4 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 11.6% 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

## Senior Population



### Key Demographics

- The population older than 65 years in the region was nearly 148,000 people in 2017. The average elderly population in 2017 was 13.9% of the region.
- The highest concentration area of elderly population is mainly in the rural area of the region.

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- Top priorities include transportation, home health care, and home repairs.
- Emergency preparedness is a key issue. Many seniors live paycheck to paycheck, on a fixed income.

### Opportunities

- Ensure the senior population knows they matter in the planning process and are a valued constituency.
- Communicate information in a way that is accessible and encourages participation.
- Increase outreach in rural areas where more seniors reside in the region.

### Challenges

- Many do not have access to Internet/computers. If they do have access, they don't feel comfortable using it.
- Lack of understanding of the impact of participation. Need to close feedback loop to know they are making a difference.
- There is an interest in transportation and emergency preparedness, but not an interest in looking far into the future. Many have immediate needs.

### Preferred Channels

- Community Partners
- Senior Connections maintains a newsletter with a circulation of 55K.
- Friendship Cafés—Social events that often include free meals and a speaker from an organization.

### Preferred Content Types

- Mobile phone outreach (Ages 50-65 especially)
- TV news/commercials (Over 60)
- Face-to-face interactions

## Technical Experts



### Key Demographics

- Administrators, planning directors, and transportation engineers from local governments and transportation related agencies
- Those who serve on the RRTPO Technical Advisory Committee

### Key Characteristics/Takeaways

- These stakeholders understand the jargon and lingo. They are often decisionmakers, as well as members of the community.

### Opportunities

- Build buy-in for PlanRVA's work.
- Get to know a diverse group of technical professionals for potential committee appointments.
- Utilize their position as both experts and members of the community.

### Challenges

- Communicating to this group and to the larger public requires different language and tools. In public meetings, this gap looms large.
- Building excitement around technicalities.

### Preferred Channels

- PlanRVA official channels
- Partnerships with industry groups

### Preferred Content Types

- Full details and plans, including maps, charts, etc.
- Online access with options to self-explore
- Web resources with links to dig deeper

## Appendix C: PlanRVA Community Engagement Roles and Responsibilities

Job Title	Role Today	Role in One Year
<b>Executive Director</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as Title VI coordinator</li> <li>• Responds to PlanRVA media inquiries</li> <li>• Executes community engagement priorities as set by the Commission</li> <li>• Serves as the primary spokesperson for PlanRVA</li> <li>• Participates in meetings and events</li> <li>• Manages community partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides oversight to Title VI plan</li> <li>• Serves as primary spokesperson for PlanRVA</li> <li>• Participates in meetings and events</li> <li>• Provides oversight to community engagement activities</li> </ul>
<b>Director of Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responds to RRTPO media inquiries</li> <li>• Executes community engagement priorities</li> <li>• Serves as the primary spokesperson for RRTPO</li> <li>• Participates in meetings and events</li> <li>• Manages community partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides oversight to Title VI plan</li> <li>• Serves as primary spokesperson for RRTPO</li> <li>• Participates in meetings and events</li> <li>• Provides oversight to RRTPO community engagement activities</li> </ul>
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops communication pieces (collateral) as needed to support programmatic outreach, agency wide promotion and internal communication priorities</li> <li>• Manages the agency's social media accounts including curation of content and scheduling for posting</li> <li>• Manages meeting room access, equipment and materials necessary for internal and external use</li> <li>• Coordinates general agency reception and first impressions for guests visiting and attempting to contact the PlanRVA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports execution of social media strategy</li> <li>• Supports execution of media outreach plan</li> <li>• Supports publication of Public Engagement Annual Report</li> <li>• Supports website updates</li> <li>• Manages meeting room access, equipment and materials necessary for internal and external use</li> <li>• Coordinates general agency reception and first impressions for guests visiting and attempting to contact PlanRVA</li> </ul>

<b>Project Coordinator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates directly, and on behalf of the Executive Director with Commissioners, member jurisdictions' Executives, Partner Agency Heads, staff and others on matters related to the organization's programmatic initiatives or to schedule meetings and events</li> </ul>	
<b>Planners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attends public meetings on behalf of the agency and acts as a liaison to identified organizations;</li> <li>Assists with the planning, logistics and preparation of hosted meetings and events and development/ implementation of strategies to increase public engagement</li> <li>Represents the agency at public meetings and presents material through formal and informal presentations</li> <li>Identifies community problems, issues, and opportunities for improved planning in the region</li> <li>Executes community surveys</li> <li>Serves as the Tribal liaison</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates project-based community engagement plans</li> <li>Incorporates public engagement into project schedule</li> <li>Assists with the development of content for outreach materials</li> <li>Attends meetings and events as needed to provide subject matter expertise</li> <li>Executes community surveys with guidance from Community Engagement Associate</li> <li>Supports engagement work with Tribal Nations</li> <li>Works with Community Engagement Manager to identify community problems, issues, and opportunities for improved planning in the Richmond Region</li> <li>Assists with the development of content for outreach materials</li> <li>Attends meetings and events as needed to provide subject matter expertise</li> </ul>
<b>On-Call Bench of Consultants – Brand Identity, Marketing/ Communications, Public Outreach and Engagement Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops and implements brand identity</li> <li>Conducts data gathering, market research and analysis</li> <li>Develops data visualization and presentation</li> <li>Develops communications concepts and planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides strategic community engagement and communications counsel</li> <li>Develops strategic plans as needed</li> <li>Develops and executes marketing and community engagements plans</li> </ul>



<p><b>On-Call Bench of Consultants – Brand Identity, Marketing/ Communications, Public Outreach and Engagement Services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides creative services, multi-media design, strategic planning and management</li> <li>• Develops electronic/digital and direct marketing</li> <li>• Supports website design and maintenance</li> <li>• Provides Customer Relationship Management Service (CRM) platforms</li> <li>• Provides access and language translation</li> <li>• Conducts community surveying, polling and sentiment research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides creative services including multi-media design and data visualization</li> <li>• Supports website design and maintenance</li> <li>• Provides CRM support</li> <li>• Provides access and language translation</li> <li>• Conducts market research including community surveying, polling, and sentiment research</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Engagement Manager</b></p>	<p>—</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as the lead staffer in executing PlanRVA’s community engagement strategy</li> <li>• Serves as Title VI coordinator</li> <li>• Serves as tribal liaison with support from Planners</li> <li>• Serves as an alternate spokesperson for PlanRVA</li> <li>• Leads and prepares all community engagement planning processes and documents including the Limited English Proficiency Plan, the Title VI Plan, the Public Engagement Plan, and public outreach requirements for all of PlanRVA’s programs and products</li> <li>• Manages all outreach and communications including media outreach, social media, events with execution support from Project Coordinator</li> <li>• Reviews all public materials for consistency with branding and messaging</li> <li>• Develops and manages partnerships with community organizations</li> <li>• Assists with the development and execution of project-based community engagement plans with the support of Planners</li> <li>• Manages public comment periods with the support of Planners</li> <li>• Attends meetings, prepares and delivers public presentations</li> </ul>

<p><b>Community Engagement Manager</b></p>	<p>—</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attends partner and community events as a representative of PlanRVA</li> <li>• Serves as a technical and/or subject-matter expert in community engagement in a regional planning context</li> <li>• Researches and deploys effective and innovative public engagement tools and practices, with a focus on equity and inclusion</li> <li>• Provides advice and consultation to partners and clients in the region</li> <li>• Coordinates with marketing consultants, translators and interpreters as needed</li> <li>• Tracks results of engagement and outreach tactics and adjusts Community Engagement Strategy as needed</li> <li>• Manages publication of Public Engagement Annual Report</li> </ul>
<p>Public Engagement Committees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides strategic counsel to PlanRVA on community engagement</li> <li>• Approves resources for community engagement activities</li> <li>• Oversees community engagement metrics</li> <li>• Assists with building community relationships and partnerships</li> <li>• Provides invitations to get the community involved with PlanRVA activities</li> <li>• Recommends community engagement policies</li> <li>• Host community meetings as needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides strategic counsel to PlanRVA on community engagement</li> <li>• Approves resources for community engagement activities</li> <li>• Oversees community engagement metrics</li> <li>• Assists with building community relationships and partnerships</li> <li>• Provides invitations to get the community involved with PlanRVA activities</li> <li>• Recommends community engagement policies</li> <li>• Host community meetings as needed</li> </ul>



## Position Announcement

**Position Description and Responsibilities:** PlanRVA is seeking applications from self-starters with strong organizational skills, communications and community engagement experience. Responsibilities include:

- Maintaining the community engagement strategy including evaluation and updates to the strategy
- Providing strategic guidance on communications and outreach
- Coordinating participation in community events
- Executing strategies to engage Tribes, historically underserved and limited English proficient communities
- Serving as an alternate spokesperson for the organization
- Serving as the agency’s Title VI coordinator
- Managing all outreach and communications including media outreach, social media, events with execution support from Project Coordinator
- Reviewing all public materials for consistency with branding and messaging
- Developing and managing partnerships with community organizations
- Assisting with the development and execution of project-based community engagement plans with the support of Planners
- Attending meetings and preparing and delivering public presentations
- Attending partner and community events as a representative of PlanRVA
- Coordinating with marketing consultants, translators and interpreters as needed
- Managing publication of Public Engagement Annual Report

This mid-level position will have supervisory responsibilities and report directly to the Executive Director of Plan RVA.

**Education:** Bachelors in marketing, communications, business, or related field desired

Experience: 8+ years of experience in marketing, communications, event coordination, or community engagement

Desired Qualifications:

- Experience working with government agencies
- Experience with media outreach, social media management, event planning, and community engagement
- Strong organizational and planning skills
- Well spoken and comfortable serving as a spokesperson for the organization
- Strong communications writing skills
- Experience with CRM tools
- Experience with Adobe Creative Suite and Microsoft Office
- Knowledge of Title VI
- Bilingual and fluent in both English and Spanish (desired but not required)

**To Apply:** Interested persons should submit a completed application for employment (available for download on the PlanRVA website) along with a cover letter and resume to [HR@PlanRVA.org](mailto:HR@PlanRVA.org) with Attn: Martha Heeter in the Subject Line.

-----  
\*\*Compensation is subject to negotiation and will be based on experience.

**Ashland | Charles City | Chesterfield | Goochland | Hanover | Henrico | New Kent | Powhatan | Richmond  
Richmond Regional Planning District Commission**



**D**

## Appendix D: Richmond Region Community Events

The following list offers an overview of community events happening across the nine localities. It is not an exhaustive list but can be used as a reference point when planning participation in a community event to reach people where they are.

### January

[Jewish Food Festival](#)

### February

[ChinaFest](#)

### March

[Virginia Wine Expo](#)  
[Shamrock the Block](#)  
[VCU French Film Festival](#)  
[Church Hill Irish Festival](#)  
[Easter on Parade](#)

### April

[VCU Intercultural Festival](#)  
[French Food Festival](#)  
[Ashland Train Day](#)  
[Powhatan's Festival of Fiber](#)

### May

[Dominion Energy Riverrock](#)  
[Que Pasa Festival](#)  
[Asian American Celebration](#)  
[Arts in the Park](#)  
[Ashland Strawberry Faire](#)  
[Powhatan County Fair](#)  
[Virginia Hops and Barley Festival](#)

### June

[Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration](#)  
[Broad Appetit](#)  
[Greek Food Festival](#)  
[Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts](#)  
[Bumblebee Jamboree](#)  
[Celebrate Varina](#)  
[James River Batteau Festival](#)

### July

[Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts](#)  
[Hanover Tomato Festival](#)  
[Carytown Watermelon Festival](#)

### August

[Richmond Jazz and Music Festival](#)  
[Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts](#)  
[Filipino Festival](#)  
[Richmond International Dragon Boat Festival](#)  
[Down Home Family Reunion](#)  
[Chesterfield County Fair](#)  
[National Night Out](#)

### September

[Publick Days](#)  
[Richmond Vegetarian Festival](#)  
[43rd Street Festival of the Arts](#)  
[Chickahominy Fall Festival & Pow Wow](#)  
[ChesterFest](#)  
[Armenian Food Festival](#)  
[St. Benedict Oktoberfest](#)  
[Festival of India](#)  
[Goochland Day and Parade](#)  
[RVA Street Art Festival](#)  
[James River Week](#)

### October

[2nd Street Festival](#)  
[Lebanese Food Festival](#)  
[The Great Pumpkin Festival at Kings Dominion](#)  
[Richmond Folk Festival](#)  
[Powhatan Festival of the Grape](#)

[A Taste of New Kent](#)  
[Richmond Oktoberfest](#)  
[Imagine Festival](#)  
[Central Virginia Celtic Festival and Highland Games](#)  
[Folk Festival](#)

### November

[Dia de los Muertos](#)  
[Hops in the Park](#)  
[Fire, Flour, and Fork](#)  
[Festival Foods and Feasts of Colonial Virginia](#)  
[Christmas in the Village of Powhatan](#)

### December

[Capital City Kwanzaa Festival](#)  
[James River Parade of Lights](#)

### Ongoing Events

[Richmond Night Market](#)  
[Ashland Fourth Fridays](#)  
[RVA First Fridays](#)  
[Safe Space Market](#)

### Farmers Markets

[Ashland](#)  
[Charles City County](#)  
[Chesterfield County](#)  
[Goochland](#)  
[Manakin Market](#)  
[Powhatan Village](#)  
[Midlothian Urban Farmhouse](#)  
[The Montpelier Center](#)  
[Dorey Park](#)  
[West End](#)  
[Lakeside](#)  
[New Kent County](#)

## E

## Appendix E: Tactics – Hours and Pricing Breakdown

The following chart defines recommended communications tactics and activities by priority.

Priorities are set as identified with PlanRVA during a Prioritization Workshop held on May 26, 2021, as well as those activities which will have the highest likelihood of achieving PlanRVA's stated communications goals. Activities and priorities should be evaluated each year as they are likely to shift. For example, in this first year, high priority is placed on establishing tracking systems in order to better aid in the evaluation of communications techniques and reach. Next year, priority may be placed on further building out successful programs and expanding reach to additional stakeholders.

Hours and high-level cost estimates are provided to assist with further prioritization of activities. Actual hours and costs will vary depending on the experience and qualifications of the personnel executing the work. An independent government cost estimate should also be developed prior to allocating resources to any activity.

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
<b>Social Media</b>					
1. Develop a social media style guide and toolkit that defines PlanRVA's voice and provides best practices for consistent use, engagement, and accessibility.	8	One time	Included as part of strategy development	High	
2. Develop and update social media content calendar.	4	Monthly	\$5,000.00	High	
3. Update PlanRVA descriptions across to Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to be consistent and match branding. Add links to all three channels on the PlanRVA website.	4	One time	\$400	High	
4. Monitor social media a. On Facebook, join appropriate community groups as the PlanRVA page. Employ social listening to see topic areas of highest interest and, where appropriate, actively participate in discussions as PlanRVA.	30	Monthly	\$40,000.00	High	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
<p>5. Maintain social media content.</p> <p>a. Provide a variety of content to include video, graphics, and links. A <a href="#">2021 Sprout Social survey</a> of social media marketing trends found 68% of consumers preferred images, 50% preferred videos, and 30% enjoyed text-based posts.</p> <p>b. Put people at the center of social media. Share quotes from local leaders, tell human stories about the impact of PlanRVA's work, build on the series of employee profiles, and create opportunities for user-generated content like photo contests.</p> <p>c. As a regional convener, PlanRVA's social media should share highlights from all localities related to planning, transportation, emergency management, and the environment. These shares expand reach, build credibility, and deepen relationships with local government staff who are trying to get the word out.</p>	30	Monthly	\$40,000.00	High	
<p>6. Utilize partnerships for social media content development</p> <p>a. Provide social media post text and images to partners and localities, encouraging them to post on behalf of PlanRVA. Do the same for them. Share content from partners that would be relevant to your audience.</p> <p>b. Partner on social media events (e.g., Facebook Live, Instagram Live, YouTube Live) with community-based organizations with a substantial and engaged social media following to help historically underserved communities understand upcoming projects/plans for public input.</p>	8	Monthly	\$8,000.00	Medium	
<p>7. Allocate budget for geotargeted advertising to promote open comment periods. Make specific ads for each locality or impacted area with fresh images and language related to the specific impacts for the people in the area.</p>	16	Per comment period	\$9,000.00 labor \$3,000.00 media buying	Low	Assumes 6 comment periods/year
<p>8. Create a lead magnet to promote on social media platforms to get signups for PlanRVA's newsletter and text messages.</p>	16	Annually	\$2,000.00	Low	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
<b>PlanRVA Meetings</b>					
1. Develop community engagement plan checklist for each project that outlines how to set community engagement goals and identify activities to achieve those goals.	16	One time	Included as part of strategy development	High	
2. Create a Staff Playbook for Public Meetings. This playbook should include an easy-to-follow set of standards for PlanRVA staff to consider when opening a public comment process, scheduling public meetings, and planning the experience of the community during public engagement processes.	24	One time	Included as part of Title VI task order	High	
3. Work with Tribal Nations in the Richmond Region to craft land acknowledgments that can be delivered at all meetings. Ensure culturally sensitive language and appropriate word choice.	8	One time	\$800	Medium	
<b>Other Meetings</b>					
1. Partner with other organizations to solicit input at existing meetings where target audiences attend. Ideally partnerships should be representative of the demographics of the Richmond Region.	16	Per comment period	\$12,000.00	High	Assumes 6 comment periods/year
2. Develop and maintain speaking engagement calendar; coordinate speaking engagement logistics. a. Engage with local government officials across the region by attending their council/commission meetings and request to be added to the agenda. This offers the opportunity for them to ask questions and to keep PlanRVA visible in every locality. b. PlanRVA <a href="#">notes on its website</a> that staffers are available to speak at meetings. Make this a proactive effort with outreach to neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, civic clubs and organizations, non-profit boards, local legislative bodies, other planning commissions, and regional and national conferences.	8	Monthly	\$7,500.00	High	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
3. Develop standard presentation for community meetings that can be tailored depending on the audience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Create tailored presentation and informational materials for Tribal Nations to share what is known and unknown about the project at the beginning in order to focus limited resources.</li> </ul>	4	Per presentation	Included as part of strategy development	High	Assumes two presentations a month
<b>Events</b>					
1. Build community event calendar and determine level of participation (participant, presenter, booth, etc); manage all logistics for event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Attend and have a significant presence at large-scale community events. See a list of Richmond Region festivals and events in <a href="#">Appendix D</a>.</li> <li>b. Partner with at least one organization for each Historically Underserved Community group at a large-scale event to bring awareness to PlanRVA’s mission and share upcoming public participation opportunities. These events should become more frequent around open comment periods, surveys, or key meetings.</li> <li>c. Identify career fairs and large-scale special events at colleges and universities where PlanRVA can participate.</li> <li>d. Work with Senior Connections to <u>attend and present at Friendship Cafes</u>.</li> <li>e. Set up information booths at <u>Sportsbackers events</u>.</li> <li>f. Coordinate virtual community events with partnering organizations to maximize reach.</li> </ul>	40	Monthly	\$40,000.00 labor \$10,000.00 booth space	High	Assumes one event a month  Assumes not all events will require purchase of booth space and that space will be available at a discount to PlanRVA
2. Develop PlanRVA handout and translate materials into Spanish, Cambodian, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese.	16	One time	\$2,000.00 labor \$1,000.00 translation	High	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
3. Develop engaging booth display and standard collateral for distribution at community events.	32	One time	\$3,000.00 labor \$5,000.00 booth display \$5,000.00 translation	Low	
4. Develop and distribute PlanRVA branded giveaways at community events.			\$5,000.00 giveaways	Low	
<b>Media Outreach</b>					
1. Create a Media Outreach Guide that includes a full media list of traditional (print, radio, television) and non-traditional outlets (podcasts, regional newsletters) and non-English publications, best practices, and ways to think beyond interviews and press releases to package PlanRVA's extensive data collection for the media.	16	One time	Included as part of strategy development	High	
2. Regularly monitor media for coverage.	10	Monthly	\$12,000.00	High	
3. Advertise for public meetings and comment periods in traditional and non-traditional outlets including social media and websites. Notices should be placed in English and Spanish.	16	Per comment period	\$9,000.00 labor \$18,000.00 media buying	Medium	
4. Host regular meetings and round tables with members of the press. The press is more likely to quote people they have easy access to and this offers the ability for PlanRVA to provide context around data and projects.	8	Monthly	\$9,600.00	Low	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
<b>Videos</b>					
1. Create three 1-2 minute instructional videos including how to participate in comment periods, how to access info on website, and how to participate in PlanRVA in general.	32	Per video	\$9,600.00 labor \$6,000.00 video production	High	Assumes the development of three videos
2. Create data visualization videos to accompany projects like the Long Range Transportation Plan to show how the Richmond Region will change over time and how that is factored in at PlanRVA.	32	Per video	\$4,000.00 labor \$16,000.00 video production	High	Assumes the creation of one video for one high-profile project
3. Build upon the existing “Better Together” webinar series and extend the longevity beyond the livestream. Add descriptions to the YouTube replays, tag participating partners on social media, and include recaps of the conversations on the PlanRVA website.	4	One time	\$400	Medium	
4. Splice recorded video from meetings and webinars spliced into 60-90 second clips featuring key quotes and takeaways to be shared on social media.	4	Per video	\$20,000.00	Medium	Assumes one video per meeting (approximately one per week)
5. Create videos to show the impact of PlanRVA’s work. Tell a success story.	24	Per video	\$2,000.00 labor \$2,000.00 video production	Medium	Assume the creation of one video
6. Use video to highlight PlanRVA staff, particularly those involved in community outreach and engagement.	24	Per video	\$2,000.00 labor \$2,500.00 video production	Low	Assumes 2 rounds of revisions

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
<b>Email Newsletter</b>					
1. Invest in a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and build a comprehensive stakeholder list that is reflective of the demographics of the Richmond Region.	40	One time	\$4,000.00 labor \$1,000.00 CRM tool	High	
2. Maintain CRM tool	4	Monthly	\$5,000.00	High	
3. Follow up to all emails received by members of the public, including thank you notes for participating in public processes and the actions taken because of feedback.	20	Monthly	\$24,000.00	High	
4. Create a regular newsletter that goes beyond meeting recaps and features interesting data sets, community events, and PlanRVA news. Distribute to PlanRVA stakeholders, as well as see if community partners will share information.	24	Monthly	\$30,000.00 \$600.00 Email Distribution tool	Low	
5. Absorb email list from the decommissioned Capital Region Collective.	4	One time	\$400.00	Medium	
<b>Website</b>					
1. Update online public comment forms to better match specific feedback needed. Offer specific questions that are appropriate for the stakeholder type.	4	Per comment period	\$2,400.00	High	
2. Create a follow-up page for every comment period with the results, showing how it was incorporated and overview of the feedback received.	4	Per comment period	\$2,400.00	High	
3. Update website as needed with new information about staff and projects	4	Monthly	\$5,000.00	High	
4. Conduct an accessibility audit. This should not only focus on ADA compliance, but offer recommendations for increased functionality and ease of use for disabled community members.	10	One time	\$2,000.00	High	



Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
5. Conduct User Experience (UX) research and gather recommendations for updates based on the way the community uses the website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conduct an audit of broken links to PlanRVA's website and update as needed (example: <a href="https://www.rva.gov/emergency-management/emacy">https://www.rva.gov/emergency-management/emacy</a>).</li> <li>b. Engage the public immediately upon visiting the website. Use the website banner space to focus on ways the public can get involved and what involvement means for them.</li> </ul>	30	One time	\$25,000.00	High	Assumes 5 UX interviews
6. Set up Google analytics dashboard for tracking website metrics	4	Monthly	\$5,000.00	High	
7. Expand translation offerings for the PlanRVA website beyond Spanish to include Korean, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Mandarin. Use visual clues to indicate the language (such as flags).	5	One time	\$5,000.00	Medium	Translation evaluation
8. Decommission of the Capital Region Collaborative website and data migration of relevant pages to PlanRVA's website.	80	One time	Included as part of on-call task order	Medium	Hours depend on the level of collaboration needed with other entities
<b>Mail</b>					
1. Send direct mail advertising public comment periods to communities without internet access, such as rural, senior, Tribal, low-income populations. If budget allows, include comment forms with pre-paid return postage.	8	Per comment period	\$4,800.00 labor \$6,000.00 printing \$3,300.00 postage	High	Assumes 6 comment periods/year

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
2. Translate mailings into Spanish.	8	Per comment period	\$7,200.00	High	
<b>Participation Incentives</b>					
1. Develop a community engagement plan for each project. a. Clearly define public participation goal at the start of every comment period utilizing the International Association of Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation (see <a href="#">Appendix A</a> ).	16	Per comment period	\$12,000.00	High	
2. Offer honorarium for participation in meetings by Tribal representatives.	2	Per meeting	\$1,200.00 labor \$600.00 honorarium	High	
3. Organize incentives for participation in comment periods such as a drawing for a \$100 gift card or partner with local organizations to offer incentives like free memberships.	8	Per comment period	\$5,000.00 labor \$600 incentive purchase	Low	Assumes 6 comment periods/year
4. Offer branded giveaways at events and meetings for participation.	16	Annually	\$2,500.00 labor \$2,000.00 giveaway purchase	Low	
<b>Staff Trainings</b>					
1. Secure a contractor to provide mandatory unconscious bias training to PlanRVA staff. PlanRVA cannot seek to mitigate bias until there is an awareness of what is already there.	N/A	Per training	\$2,000.00	High	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
2. Secure a contractor to provide a training on public meeting planning to PlanRVA staff, offering insight into why each step matters for accessibility and inclusivity. The training will walk through how to determine the public engagement goal for each meeting or project and how to use the specific guidelines and steps that match. The training will be tailored to PlanRVA's new Public Meeting Playbook.	N/A	Per training	\$2,500.00	High	
3. Circulate internal talking points to all staff whenever a public comment period is open so all staff are able to answer general questions from the public about how to participate and what the agency is looking for.	4	Per comment period	\$2,400.00	High	
4. Secure a contractor to provide media training to staff who serve as spokespeople in order to learn how to develop talking points, how to stay on message, and how to present themselves and the agency best for each medium.	N/A	Per training	\$2,500.00	Medium	
5. Secure a contractor to provide training on effectively speaking/presenting at public meetings. This training would allow staff to learn how to communicate technical projects into plain language and how to develop key messages to encourage participation and build buy-in.	N/A	Per training	\$1,000.00	Medium	
<b>Partner Outreach</b>					
1. Expand membership of public engagement committee beyond elected officials.	20	One time	\$3,000.00	High	
2. Select a manageable number of organizations each year to target for partnership opportunities. Partnership opportunities would include partnering on events, sharing content on its communications vehicles. Ideally partnerships should be representative of the demographics of the Richmond Region.	8	Monthly	\$10,000.00	High	

Tactic	Hrs.	Frequency	Estimated Annual Cost	Priority	Assumptions
3. For each comment period, develop and distribute a community-based toolkit of customizable emails, newsletter articles, graphics, and social media content that community-based organizations can use to reach historically underserved communities. This will help community-based organizations amplify PlanRVA's messages and initiatives.	16	Per comment period	\$10,000.00 labor \$6,000.00 printing	High	Assumes 6 comment periods/year
4. Establish a K-12 education program in partnership with educational organizations (Community Foundation Greater Richmond, Chesterfield Education Foundation, Henrico Education Foundation, Richmond Public Schools Education Foundation) to educate school children on civic engagement and the role of a regional planning commission. Create short downloadable curriculums for each grade-level and work with partners for distribution.	80	One time	\$10,000.00 labor	Low	
5. Work with high schools across the region to host workshops, offering students the chance to learn about career opportunities and planning basics. Students would spend the day at a chosen local site and work with PlanRVA staff to think through how make improvements to the area for the future and then present their ideas to a panel.	80	One time	\$15,000.00 labor \$2,500.00 meeting materials	Low	
<b>Mobile Outreach</b>					
1. Create a text message program to share comment period information and other ways to provide feedback.	4	Per comment period	\$5,000.00 labor \$500.00 text messaging system	Medium	
2. Explore the possibility of working with partner organizations to incorporate information into mobile apps.	40	One time	\$5,000.00	Low	

# **PlanRVA Community Engagement**

## Assessment Report

May 2021



## Table of Contents

### PlanRVA Community Engagement Assessment Report

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
A. Background and Purpose	1
B. Methodology and Approach	1
C. How to Read this Document	2
<b>II. Major Findings</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>III. Recommendations</b>	<b>7</b>

### Appendices

<b>Appendix A: Background Research</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix B: Interview Assessment Details</b>	<b>14</b>
Methodology	14
Participants	14
Assessment Questions	15
<b>Appendix C: Benchmarking Assessment Details</b>	<b>18</b>
Methodology	18
Participants	18
Assessment Questions	18
<b>Appendix D: Survey Assessment Details</b>	<b>20</b>
Methodology	20
Participants	20
Assessment Questions	20
Survey Results	23
<b>Appendix E: Planning Templates</b>	<b>29</b>

## I. Introduction

### A. Background and Purpose

PlanRVA is developing a new community engagement strategy. To support this endeavor, PlanRVA has contracted with Avid Core and Kearns & West to assess its current community engagement efforts.

The goals of this assessment are to understand PlanRVA's current landscape of community engagement, identify areas for potential improvement in their community engagement efforts, and highlight opportunities for increasing awareness of and involvement in PlanRVA's public processes. As a staff member for PlanRVA, you can provide valuable insights based on your deep understanding of PlanRVA and its community engagement efforts.

Findings from this assessment will be captured in an assessment report to inform the development of an agency-wide Community Engagement Strategy for PlanRVA. This Community Engagement Strategy will provide a measurable framework for future activities that prioritize equitable and inclusive community engagement efforts.

### B. Methodology and Approach

This assessment included background research sourced from the PlanRVA website and social media platforms; the archives of *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* and other local news outlets; and review of materials produced by PlanRVA. It is also informed by the input from 13 confidential, informal, semi-structured interviews, as well as a survey distributed to internal staff and partners. PlanRVA provided input on the list of interviewees. The list of internal and external interviewees that were invited to participate in the interview assessment, as well as the interview questions are attached in [Appendix B](#).

Three benchmarking interviews were conducted with peer organizations of similar size and scope to PlanRVA: Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), and the Centralia Regional Council. The list of interviewees that participated in the benchmarking assessment, as well as the interview questions are attached in [Appendix C](#).

The survey assessment was distributed to internal staff and affiliated partners. The list of organizations that were invited to complete the survey, as well as the survey questions are attached in [Appendix D](#).

Apart from the benchmarking assessment interviews, all interviewees and survey respondents participated with an assurance that, while interviewees' names would be shared, specific comments would not be attributed to specific individual interviewees. Interview and survey questions were developed in consultation with PlanRVA staff.

The interviews were conducted by Kearns & West. The interviews ranged from 45 – 60 minutes. The survey and interviews were conducted between April 2021 and May 2021.

### C. How to Read this Document

The following points provide additional context for this summary document.

First, this summary is a synthesis of views shared during interviews; it does not necessarily reflect the views of, or specific recommendations by, Avid Core or Kearns & West.

Second, while interviewers used similar questions for all interviews, the time spent on each question varied from interview to interview, as did the level of detail in individual responses to questions. The approach to analyzing the interview information has been primarily inductive. All findings were reviewed together and synthesized and summarized in a way that characterizes both the breadth of responses as well as cross-cutting themes. We present our findings qualitatively and use words like “all,” “most,” “many,” “a few,” “some,” or “one” to provide readers with an indication of the extent to which any particular view or comment was shared by other interviewees. “Most” indicates that more than half of interviewees noted the item. “Many” indicates that 5 – 10 interviewees noted the item. “Several” and “a few” indicates that 2 – 4 interviewees noted the item.

“Internal stakeholders” refer to PlanRVA staff and affiliated partners that were interviewed or responded to the survey. “External stakeholders” refer to stakeholders not affiliated with PlanRVA that were interviewed.



## II. Major Findings

This section details the major themes from the community engagement assessment. The findings are enumerated in no particular order. The findings incorporate input received during the internal and external interviews, benchmarking assessment, and survey.

- A. Internal stakeholders indicated that existing PlanRVA staff and budget will allow only for maintaining the “status quo” of current community engagement efforts. These efforts are significantly less than what is undertaken by agencies benchmarked for this assessment.

There is a desire among many internal stakeholders to improve community engagement efforts and agency awareness, particularly as it relates to PlanRVA’s involvement with vulnerable communities, social media presence, branding, and regional collaboration. However, all internal stakeholders shared that they are currently working at full capacity with no availability to take on additional responsibilities related to increased community engagement. Several internal stakeholders shared that they only conduct community engagement for a project when it is state or federally mandated due to time and resource constraints. As clarified by one internal stakeholder, undertaking additional community engagement in their current position would result in them being able to do less work elsewhere, which was not viewed favorably.

Several internal stakeholders consistently expressed interest in having community engagement be a resourced position within PlanRVA. A few internal stakeholders expressed an interest in receiving training related to conducting successful community engagement to enhance their own understanding and skills.

Among the agencies that participated in the benchmarking assessment - CAMPO (Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization), OKI (Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments), and Centralina Regional Council (serving the greater Charlotte region in North Carolina) - community engagement was a consistent and resourced component agency ethos, projects, and initiatives. CAMPO and OKI each have two staff members that are fully dedicated to community engagement, while staff within different departments of Centralina have community engagement listed within their portfolio of job responsibilities. All three agencies shared a consistent desire to intentionally incorporate community voices into public planning processes.

- B. Internal stakeholders and survey respondents indicated that an investment by PlanRVA in relationship building has resulted in additional participation by external organizations and stakeholders in planning processes.

Survey respondents indicated that PlanRVA has been moderately successful in engaging members of the public within the Richmond Region. When asked about examples of successful community engagements by PlanRVA, several survey respondents mentioned PlanRVA’s public input surveys, specifically surveys associated with the development of

the Long-Range Transportation Plan, co-sponsoring or co-hosting community events with community organizations or groups, such as the bicyclist community and special interest groups, as well as internal staff involvement within external community events and organizations.

All internal stakeholders highlighted recent examples of expanded community engagement in specific planning and public processes. For example, PlanRVA has coordinated efforts to incorporate and collaborate with Tribal Nations as part of its Environmental Program. Additionally, the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) has begun to identify gaps in community engagement to cultivate relationships with a range of community organizations and improve upon the way the RRTPO communicates and disseminates information. One internal stakeholder highlighted that the RRTPO's Public Engagement Plan has served as a helpful foundation for providing guidance to PlanRVA staff on how to conduct community engagement and offering agency aspirations related to improved community engagement efforts. They emphasized that the development of this plan represents a significant improvement in the way the agency approaches community engagement, compared to efforts before the plan was developed. According to some internal stakeholders interviewed, these and other focused efforts have resulted in PlanRVA being successful in working to connect with specific regional entities that may have been previously overlooked by public sector agencies. There was also recognition and appreciation of PlanRVA's investment in relationship building among several external stakeholders. These stakeholders explained that PlanRVA has played a significant role in connecting their organizations with neighboring counties for involvement in additional governmental processes. At the same time, a few external stakeholders indicated that they are sometimes invited to participate in an overwhelming number of events and surveys sponsored by PlanRVA. As a result, they and their constituencies cannot always engage at the levels desired by PlanRVA.

PlanRVA's desire to enhance public engagement is hindered by limited collaboration across the region among the nine member jurisdictions and agencies, in the eyes of external stakeholders and survey respondents. Many external stakeholders and several survey respondents referenced a perception that they and, in their opinion, others in the community have of Richmond's regional disconnectedness, particularly between the City of Richmond, its neighboring counties, and Richmond Region community-based organizations. External stakeholders and survey respondents elaborated that this perceived disconnectedness served as a hinderance in facilitating regional innovation and addressing regional issues.

Several external stakeholders alluded to the notion that the City of Richmond is in a unique position to serve as a regional collaborator to address and advance key regional issues.

- C. External stakeholders and survey respondents believe that information about community issues and regional activities is typically consumed through local media, word of mouth, or digital tools. Information sharing methods are highly dependent on the type of community or stakeholder.**

External stakeholders identified a variety of communications channels that are helpful in receiving information related to community issues and regional activities. Importantly, many external stakeholders noted that preferred methods of information sharing are highly dependent on the type of community or stakeholder, as this typically dictates who their trusted community leaders and information sources are.

External stakeholders identified prominent local media channels, including Richmond-area radio channels (Virginia Public Radio and Kiss Richmond & Miss Community Clovia were specifically mentioned), TV stations (ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox affiliates), newspapers (Richmond-Times Dispatch, VPM, New Kent City Chronicle), podcasts (RVA Dirt), social media (Facebook, Twitter), and newsletters (Good Morning RVA). The importance of media outlets targeting specific ethnic groups, particularly Hispanic and Asian communities, was also emphasized due to their role as a trusted media source and tendency to speak directly to that community's primary issues and concerns. External interviewees commonly mentioned word-of-mouth communication as an important form of information sharing. According to interviewees, prominent forms of this communication channel can be found within Richmond Region churches, libraries, personal and professional networks like the Central Virginia Asian American Chamber of Commerce and the Central Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and trusted community leaders and organizations. Several external stakeholders emphasized that the ways in which Richmond community members engage in word-of-mouth communication is highly dependent on the type of community or stakeholder. This form of communication was mentioned by several external stakeholders as an important channel for certain ethnic communities, senior communities, and those who do not have access to the internet. As summarized by one external stakeholder, Richmond is a very networked city, which results in the timeliest and most trusted information being shared by word of mouth.

Several external stakeholders shared that they do not typically turn to local media for information on regional issues related to transportation, emergency management, and environmental planning. Rather, they look directly at PlanRVA's website and newsletters to monitor key regional issues and receive information on upcoming meetings, comment periods, meeting minutes, agendas, and events. Individuals who shared their preference for this form of communication tended to be actively involved within the Richmond planning community and familiar with technical terms and planning processes.

When asked which tools PlanRVA uses that are the most effective in engaging the Richmond community, 46 percent of survey respondents indicated that social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) was the most effective tool. Many respondents indicated that the success of this tool stems from its ease of use, ability to reach broad audiences, and ability to post more engaging content. 18 percent of survey respondents said that PlanRVA's YouTube livestreams for virtual meetings are an important community engagement tool. Respondents noted that its ease of use and accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic have been important considerations. 12 percent of survey respondents said that surveys and questionnaires hosted on the PlanRVA website are important methods for community engagement due to their broad reach and ease of use. 8 percent of respondents indicated that public comment periods are the most important tool.

- D. External stakeholders and survey respondents indicated the issues that PlanRVA address are important regional topics, but the way in which the agency frames these issues are difficult for the regional public to understand; as a result, only small segments of the regional population are engaged when asked. External stakeholders that are familiar with PlanRVA and its purpose generally understand PlanRVA's value and have a desire to engage with the agency more.**

Impressions of PlanRVA by external stakeholders ranged from positive, with the potential to improve, to non-existent or unaware. Several survey respondents reflected that many Richmond Region community members are not aware of PlanRVA and its work. They added that, within their communities and network, PlanRVA and its affiliated agencies, such as the RRTPO or Central Virginia Emergency Management Alliance, are often conflated because there are not always clear distinctions between the agencies. It is important to note that PlanRVA already intends to seek consultant assistance to better differentiate the branding between PlanRVA and its affiliated agencies.

During interviews, nearly all external stakeholders reflected on the important work that PlanRVA is doing to coordinate regional collaboration around issues concerning transportation, emergency management, and environmental planning. There were no overly negative impressions of the agency during interviews or within the survey assessment, though there were pointed suggestions for improvement in community engagement related to issue framing and language, opportunities for engagement, and community awareness. Many external stakeholders and survey respondents shared that the issue framing and planning language employed by PlanRVA in their external communications can serve as a barrier to participation in PlanRVA's public processes due to community members' unfamiliarity with the technical issues and terminology. Survey respondents reflected that it is challenging to engage the Richmond Region community on planning issues due to the technical concepts being discussed and a perceived sense of public apathy around issues that are long-term oriented. Several external stakeholders noted that they regularly reframe projects and issues shared by PlanRVA to facilitate understanding and participation among their constituents. Some external stakeholders also shared that there is unclear guidance on how public comments are considered within the development of a study or project. They explained that community members might feel dissuaded to participate in public comment periods or planning processes because there is not always closure of the public feedback loop.

Many external stakeholders expressed a desire to engage with PlanRVA more to facilitate intentional outreach to, and greater participation from, Richmond's diverse communities. External stakeholders and survey respondents proposed opportunities for diversifying PlanRVA's current communications and engagement efforts, including co-hosting community meetings with local organizations; participating in external community events to increase public awareness of PlanRVA; hosting a Richmond area conference to address and collaborate on regional issues; collaborating on a quarterly newsletter that reports on regional issues; and sharing PlanRVA information and resources with their respective group members and constituents. These external stakeholders and survey respondents shared a recognition of PlanRVA's value and the important work the agency does in advancing regional issues.

### III. Recommendations

**This section outlines themes and proposed recommendations by the author of this report for increasing awareness of and involvement in PlanRVA's public processes. Recommendations are enumerated in no particular order and are informed by input from the survey and internal, external, and benchmarking interviews.**

- A. Any changes to the way that PlanRVA engages with the public will require new or additional resources.

PlanRVA should consider acquiring additional resources to facilitate increased community engagement. This could take the form of hiring one or more dedicated community engagement staff persons or utilizing PlanRVA's existing consultant bench to assist with projects. Relatedly, several internal stakeholders and survey respondents noted a perceived lack of diversity within PlanRVA staff. Internal stakeholders emphasized the importance of reviewing interviewing and hiring practices to ensure the inclusion of diverse candidates in the hiring process. PlanRVA should also consider investing in training related to community engagement for existing staff to increase knowledge, comfortability, and skill designing and conducting engagement processes.

Additional resources could also include the use of new tools or technology to elevate public meetings, which some external stakeholders mentioned are often lightly attended and hard to understand due to the technical concepts PlanRVA is discussing. These resources could range from working with external facilitators in both leading the meeting and working with small, breakout discussion groups, to leveraging telephonic and text message tools to give voice to more than just the most outspoken constituents. Ample online tools also allow broader swaths of the public to discuss, prioritize, allocate, weigh tradeoffs, and otherwise engage more deeply in the content of the discussion than might be possible at a single meeting. Different tools will suit different projects.

- B. **PlanRVA should participate in an intentional planning process to confirm and promote their vision, mission, and operating procedures as it relates to community engagement.**

While PlanRVA does have a defined vision for, or approach to, community engagement per their Title VI Plan, it is not publicized widely. Interviews with internal and external stakeholders confirmed that there is a lack of awareness and consistency in implementing this vision. Many internal stakeholders referenced that this lack of consistent guidance inhibits staff from coalescing around a unified approach to community engagement.

As such, it is important that before PlanRVA seeks to increase their community engagement efforts, they participate in an intentional planning process to confirm their vision, mission, and operating procedures as it relates to community engagement. It is important to note

that PlanRVA has already begun this planning process, through this community engagement assessment, as well as through a community engagement prioritization workshop on May 25, 2021 and the subsequent development of a community engagement strategy and implementation plan.

Internal staff advocated for developing standard operating procedures for social media content and engagement, templates, and checklists for hosting public meetings, and guidelines for meaningfully incorporating the public's input in planning processes. For example, Centralina has found success in creating communications plans, marketing tools and templates to structure their community engagement and planning processes. These tools have enabled Centralina to approach engagements and events in an organized and thoughtful manner. Similar initiatives would be in service of PlanRVA's desire, as expressed by internal stakeholders, to become more understood, valued, and relevant.

**C. Community engagement and the role of the public should be defined on a project-by-project basis to ensure intentional and comprehensive engagement with key stakeholders.**

As noted by several internal and external stakeholders, PlanRVA lacks a unified approach to community engagement, which can result in sporadic and incomprehensible public involvement. To aid in PlanRVA's desire to conduct more consistent community engagement, it is recommended that PlanRVA define the role of the community on a project-by-project basis to ensure robust involvement by key stakeholders.

At the start of each project, PlanRVA should clearly define key stakeholders and their roles of interest and influence over decisions; the role of community involvement; desired findings and outcomes; and measurable indicators of success. [Appendix E](#) includes some example templates that can help guide this work.

From there, staff could design a community engagement process that reflects the community's desired role with benchmarks along the way that facilitate reflection of achievements and calibration of expectations.

Notably, there is a recognition between internal and external stakeholders that not all members of the public should be involved in or have the same amount of influence over every project. For example, within the Central Virginia Emergency Management Alliance, it does not appear that there is much room for public input on decision making as their outreach is more educational and less participatory. However, many internal and external interviewees explained that transit issues typically warrant significant and impactful community engagement on multiple platforms and during multiple phases due to the significant impact transit projects can have on community members.

- D. There should be a continuation of PlanRVA’s stakeholder mapping and gap analysis to understand sectors of the regional population with whom PlanRVA has good relationships with and identify gaps. The sharing of resources, stakeholder lists, contacts, and tools is highly encouraged.**

The stakeholder mapping and gap analysis that the RRTPO has undertaken is a particularly important initiative for strengthening existing partnerships and identifying areas of potential improvement in community relationships. It is recommended that PlanRVA and its affiliated partners conduct a similar analysis within their nine jurisdictions to form a stakeholder database of agencies and organizations with whom they would like to connect and partner. Several survey respondents recommended that PlanRVA coordinate with its member jurisdictions and affiliated partners, so that member jurisdictions and affiliated partners can share PlanRVA’s communications and resources with their constituents, as well as share key organizational and stakeholder contacts with PlanRVA.

- E. As plans are made by PlanRVA to maintain existing relationships and cultivate new ones, the agency should be proactive in evolving these relationships to foster sustained engagement and advanced partnerships.**

PlanRVA has made considerable progress in forming relationships with Richmond-area organizations. At present, sentiments shared by several internal and external stakeholders indicate that external organizations are primarily engaged when their input is requested in a planning process. As PlanRVA looks to establish and advance community relationships, specific attention and time should be devoted to involving organizations consistently throughout projects, as well as outside of planning processes to form sustained partnerships. It may also be useful to identify how organizations with limited resources should prioritize their efforts to engage with PlanRVA, based on which projects may impact the organization and its members the most. This investment in relationship building can help create meaningful relationships between PlanRVA and Richmond-area organizations and facilitate greater participation from these organizations’ members.

Many survey respondents recommended that PlanRVA focus its engagement efforts on members of the Richmond Region community who are not currently aware of PlanRVA or involved in local government and planning initiatives. Several internal and external stakeholders and survey respondents emphasized that PlanRVA should include vulnerable communities within its engagement process, including low-income communities, disabled individuals, refugee populations, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and individuals for whom English is their second language. Survey respondents also indicated that PlanRVA should engage young adults, particularly as it relates to the Long-Range Transportation Plan, since young adults could be most impacted by regional planning efforts on a 20-year timeline.

OKI shared that one of their community engagement staff spends half of their time building relationships with community organizations, conducting outreach to disadvantaged communities, and attending community meetings and events. This significant investment

in partner building has solidified her presence as a well-known and respected figure in her community. As such, she can leverage her position as a community leader to advance partnerships with local organizations and solicit candid input from community members on regional issues.

#### **F. Significant attention should be paid to conveying information in accessible ways.**

The terminology and maps employed during public input periods and planning processes can be very advanced and complex. For instances where PlanRVA is seeking input from the general Richmond Region community, greater attention could be paid to convey information and resources in a more accessible way with less technical jargon. One external stakeholder highlighted that her agency regularly deploys three survey options during public input periods, which allows members of the public to choose a survey based on their understanding of the issue. While this creates more work for the agency, they receive increased participation that is equally useful across all three surveys.

Additionally, where possible, PlanRVA should consider disseminating materials and offering meeting translation in multiple languages. Survey respondents indicated that PlanRVA rarely ensures that its content is available in multiple languages. The languages that would be most helpful for translation, as identified by a couple external stakeholders, include Spanish, Korean, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and Chinese. Several external stakeholders advocated that the responsibility to translate materials should not fall onto community organizations.

To help facilitate increased participation among members of the community, PlanRVA should aim to clearly articulate why the community should be involved and how their feedback will be incorporated. There was a recognition among external stakeholders that transportation and land use issues are important visioning topics for the Richmond Region community. It was suggested that PlanRVA devote time during the preparation of their materials to make simplified connections between the project and how it could impact the Richmond Region community. Importantly, external stakeholders recognized that this can be challenging due to the long-term nature of PlanRVA's projects and the general public's tendency to prioritize near-term issues.

During their interview, OKI emphasized the importance of understanding the community's motivators for participating in planning processes, responding to a survey, and attending the meeting. They explained that it is important to think about the desired outcome related to community involvement in a planning process and calibrate expectations based on what is attainable. OKI shared that they have found success in offering incentives to members of the public for participation in their planning processes. For a recent incentive, OKI partnered with a community organization to offer a one-year membership to a local shared bike program, valued at \$100, to a member of the public that completed an OKI survey. They promoted the incentive within the community and a university student ended up winning the offer. The incentive was viewed favorably by members of the public and resulted in increased participation from members of the public.



### G. Providing increased opportunities for public engagement will help facilitate more robust public participation in PlanRVA's planning processes.

Internal, external, benchmarking interviewees, and survey respondents emphasized the importance of providing multiple opportunities for engagement throughout a project or planning process. When asked about the key moments or projects PlanRVA needs to engage community members, 84 percent of survey respondents indicated it should be conducted on studies of issues affecting the region; 75 percent of respondents said regional planning efforts; 49 percent said regarding regional funding decisions; and 20 percent said for Commission, Board, and Committee meetings.

Many interviewees noted that community engagement should incorporate a hybrid approach to maximize participation and reach. Offering a hybrid approach to community engagement helps to accommodate the divergent needs of diverse populations because they offer opportunities for in-person and digital involvement.

Centralina found that in addition to offering open house events for members of the public, they host surveys, post information boards, and offer flexible opportunities for members of the public to converse with staff directly. By employing a mixed methods approach, Centralina was able to attract a diverse set of participants. Several external and benchmarking interviewees remarked that they see hybrid engagement as the future of community engagement.

The concept of “meeting the public where they are” was also referenced throughout many conversations within internal, external, and benchmarking interviewees. While several internal stakeholders noted examples of where this practice is currently being employed, many external stakeholders suggested that PlanRVA could be doing this at a greater scale to better engage the Richmond Region's various ethnic populations more broadly, business communities, Tribal Nations, and community groups.

CAMPO, Centralina, and OKI also all highlighted the importance of meeting community members regularly where they are, as opposed to expecting the public to come to them. For example, OKI noted that they routinely review their community calendar to identify events where OKI staff can set up a booth and engage with members of the public. Specifically, OKI acquired a booth at a popular county fair where 2000 – 3000 members of the public were anticipated to attend. They emphasized the success of the event due to the amount of people that attended, as well as their ability to avoid recreating the wheel by engaging members of the public at an existing event.

For CAMPO, they have found success in engaging members of rural communities at homecoming football games and other school sporting events. They recognized that this type of event not only attracts students and parents, but a wide range of community members as well. By setting up a table at the homecoming football game, CAMPO was able to receive substantial feedback from community members that might not have been engaged otherwise.

## Appendix A: Background Research

The following materials were reviewed to inform the development of the community assessment design:

- PlanRVA Website
- PlanRVA social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- PlanRVA Branding Guide
- PlanRVA Public Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee proceedings
- PlanRVA Community Engagement Assessment grant application
- PlanRVA survey response demographics
- PlanRVA Title VI Plan Strategic Framework
- Emergency Management Alliance of Central Virginia Website
- Capital Region Collaborative website
- Central Virginia Transportation Authority website
- Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization Website
- Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization Public Engagement Plan
- Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization Plan 2040
- Connect RVA 2045
- Long Range Transportation Plan Public Engagement Plan
- Regional news and media outlets (Richmond-Times Dispatch, NPR VPM, RVA Magazine, RVA Hub, CBS 6 WTVR, NBC 12 WWBT, ABC 8 WRIC, Good Morning RVA)

High-level findings from Kearns & West's background research are noted below:

- Most of PlanRVA's tactics for community engagement involve one-way communication, such as newsletters, press releases, and social media, instead of two-way communication methods. As such, it does not appear that there are many opportunities for the public to provide input outside of PlanRVA's surveys. Relatedly, most public input opportunities are framed around topics that the general, Richmond-area public likely cannot grasp due to its technicality.
- PlanRVA appears to think of stakeholders as local public agencies, as opposed to community organization. For example, stakeholders listed within PlanRVA's Public Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee materials include the Emergency Management Alliance of Central Virginia, Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, Central Virginia Transportation Authority, and the Capital Region Collaborative.
- PlanRVA does not appear to have an easily available central vision or mission statement related to community engagement. Though concepts with these titles can be found in some materials and PowerPoint presentations, it is not easily found on the website.

## F

- The RRTPO Public Engagement Plan appears to offer aspirational commitments related to creating robust and creative opportunities for engagement, informing and educating the public, and continuing evaluation of the Plan's success. However, measurable details do not appear to be offered on how the Plan will be put into practice, particularly as it relates to projects and initiatives, such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Work Program, regional funding decisions, and other studies and plans.
- Social media use on Twitter and LinkedIn is infrequent; there are typically only 4 – 7 posts per quarter. Posts are primarily related to public input periods and upcoming events and meetings. PlanRVA is significantly more active on Facebook with multiple posts being published per week. Posts on Facebook are primarily related to upcoming public meetings, community events, regional activities, and public comment periods.
- Branding and collateral across PlanRVA's social media channels are mostly similar, however PlanRVA's Facebook page is still named "Richmond Regional Planning District Commission," which could create branding confusion as it does not fully reflect the agency's recent rebrand.
- The sentiment of media coverage related to PlanRVA is generally positive. Most of the articles relay important transit and emergency preparedness activities, initiatives, and updates that PlanRVA was leading or supporting. Topics covered include the work that PlanRVA is doing to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, host emergency preparedness workshops, install safer transit infrastructure, support transit regional agencies, coordinate zoning, and more. Organizations that were mentioned as opposing initiatives or activities that PlanRVA was involved with include the RVA Coalition of Concerned Civic Associations, Partnership for Smarter Growth.
- All articles were reported by regional Virginia outlets. Chris Suarez of *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and Ian M. Stewart, of Virginia Public Media (NPR/PBS) were the reporters that most frequently covered PlanRVA.

## Appendix B: Interview Assessment Details

### Methodology

The interview assessment was informed by 10 interviews confidential, informal, semi-structured interviews. The list of interviewees was developed in consultation with PlanRVA staff.

Five of the interviews involved PlanRVA staff. The intent of internal interviews was to capture insights from internal staff on their experience and aspirations related to PlanRVA's community engagement efforts. An additional five interviews were conducted with external, Richmond-based organizations. These interviews were structured as focus groups and convened the following stakeholder and community types: Local Businesses, Senior Populations, Tribal Nations, Community Groups, and Interest Groups. The intent of these interviews was to hear their experience participating in PlanRVA's public processes and understand where their communities might go to receive information about community or regional activities, particularly related to transportation, emergency management, and environmental planning.

### Participants

The following individuals and organizations were invited to participant in PlanRVA's interview assessment.

#### Internal Stakeholders

- Chet Parsons, Director of Transportation
- Sarah Stewart, Planning Manager
- Katie Moody, Regional Emergency Management Coordinator
- Sidd Kumar, Project Coordinator
- Rebekah Cazares, Planner

#### External Stakeholders

- Local Business
  - o Metropolitan Business League, Floyd Miller, Executive Director
  - o \*Central Virginia African American Chamber of Commerce, Ervin Clarke, Founder & Chairman
  - o Central Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Michel Zajur, CEO & Founder
  - o Central Virginia Asian Chamber of Commerce, My Lan Tran, Executive Director
- Senior Population
  - o Senior Connections, Penny Jordan, Community Outreach Manager
- Tribes
  - o Chickahominy Tribe, Dana Adkins, Tribal Environmental Director
  - o Chickahominy Tribe - Eastern Division, Chief Gerald Stewart,
  - o Chickahominy Tribe – Eastern Division, Doris Ann Austin, Council Woman
  - o \*Pamunkey Tribe – Chief Robert Gray

# F

- Community Groups
  - o St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Reverend Ben Campbell, Pastoral Associate
  - o Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, Albert Walker, Director for Health, Equity, and Community Engagement
  - o \*Re-Establish Richmond, Kate Ayers, Executive Director
  - o \*Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, Jonathan Zur, President & CEO
  - o Jackson Ward Collective, Rasheeda Creighton, Founder
  - o The Community Foundation, Vanessa Diamond, Senior Vice President of Civic Innovations
- Interest Groups
  - o Partnership for Smarter Growth, Sebastian Shetty, Coordinator for Policy and Administration
  - o Sportsbackers, Jon Lugbill, Executive Director
  - o RVA Rapid Transit, Nelson Reveley, Director of Operations
  - o Richmond Office of Sustainability, Kendra Norell, Community Outreach Coordinator

\*=indicates invited but did not participate by the time this report was completed

## Assessment Questions

### Internal Stakeholders

#### **Background**

1. Please describe your role within PlanRVA.
2. Please describe any experience you have directly had with coordinating or participating in PlanRVA's community engagement efforts.

#### **Existing Community Engagement Strategies**

3. What is the significance of public engagement to your work and to the work done by PlanRVA?
4. Where has PlanRVA succeeded in engaging the public?
5. What are the most effective tools that PlanRVA is currently using to engage the Richmond community? Why do you believe they are effective?
6. How does PlanRVA ensure that its outreach encompasses people from diverse cultures and languages?

#### **Interests and Aspirations**

7. What do you want people to know about PlanRVA and what actions do you want them to take to become involved in agency activities?

8. Who are the target audiences you hope to engage with the program and why (either at all or more than currently)?
9. What kinds of policies, standard operating procedures, and/or other guides does PlanRVA need to conduct successful engagement?
10. What are the key moments or projects where PlanRVA needs to engage the public over the course of a 1–3-year cycle?

### ***Issues and Concerns***

11. In your view, where might PlanRVA need to improve in how it engages with the public?
12. Are there any hurdles or challenges that might make community engagement more difficult for PlanRVA?

### ***Conclusion***

13. Is there any other information that would be helpful for Kearns & West to know as part of our assessment?
14. Is there anyone else that we should be talking with about this (internally or externally)?

### **External Stakeholders**

#### ***Background***

1. Please describe your role in your organization and your experience with PlanRVA.
2. Can you tell me more about the communities that your organization serves?
3. What are your communities' interests in or access to transportation, environmental and emergency preparedness resources?
4. When we talk about "public engagement," what do you think of?

#### ***Existing Communications & Issues/Concerns***

5. Where do your constituencies go to receive information about community issues or regional activities?
6. Who are your constituencies trusted community leaders?
7. Can you give an example of a time where you would have liked to provide input on something related to regional planning, transportation, environmental issues, or emergency management?
8. Are your constituencies informed about PlanRVA and the work it does? If so, how? If not, what might be some obstacles in learning more?

9. What kinds of opportunities have you and/or constituencies had to give input on PlanRVA's work?
10. How can PlanRVA address gaps in community engagement?

### ***Interests and Aspirations***

11. What might your community want to know about PlanRVA and its work? In your view, why does your community need to be involved in community engagement processes around transportation, environmental, and emergency preparedness issues?
12. What are the most effective ways PlanRVA can reach and engage your organization's constituencies?
13. How can PlanRVA ensure that its information and resources reach a broad audience and diverse community?

### ***Conclusion***

14. Is there any other information that would be helpful for Kearns & West to know as part of our assessment?
15. Is there anyone else that we should be talking with about this?

## Appendix C: Benchmarking Assessment Details

### Methodology

The benchmarking assessment was informed by a review of materials listed in Appendix A and input from three confidential, informal, semi-structured interviews. The list of interviewees was developed in consultation with PlanRVA staff. Organizations were selected following a review of their region's U.S. Census data and community engagement efforts to ensure that they were of similar size and scope.

The intent of these interviews was to speak with organizations that have implemented successful community engagement efforts to understand the resources devoted to community engagement; understand how the agency conducts and measures successful engagement; learn about creative strategies for reaching and engaging constituents, particularly underserved and vulnerable populations; and hear advice and lessons learned for conducting community engagement.

### Participants

The following organizations were invited to participate in PlanRVA's benchmarking assessment:

- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Doise Mars, Community Outreach Manager, Austin, TX
- Centralina Regional Council, Emily Parker, Senior Planner, Charlotte, NC
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments, Lorrie Platt, Communication & Legislative Affairs Manager, Cincinnati, OH

### Assessment Questions

#### Background Information

1. Please describe your agency, as well as your role within it.
2. Please describe the community that you serve.
3. What is the operating budget of your agency? What size budget is devoted to community engagement at your agency?
4. Do you have any staff members specifically dedicated to community engagement? If so, how many?

#### Community Engagement Practices

5. What are your agency's motivators for engaging the public or specific community groups?



## F

6. How does your agency measure success in terms of community engagement?
7. Can you describe a community engagement strategy or approach that has worked well in your community? Why do you think it was so successful?
8. What are some lessons your agency has learned along the way about community engagement? What advice or lessons learned could you offer to another planning organization that is seeking to conduct more community engagement?
9. How has your agency worked to incorporate the voices of underserved or vulnerable populations into the community engagement process? What approaches have you found to be most successful?

### Conclusion

10. Is there any other information that would be helpful for Kearns & West to know as part of our assessment?
11. Are there any other organizations that we should be talking to about this?

## Appendix D: Survey Assessment Details

### Methodology

The survey received 53 responses. PlanRVA developed a list of internal staff and agency partners to invite to complete the survey. The survey was distributed by Kearns & West. Responses were collected between April 23 – 30, 2021.

Survey questions were developed in consultation with PlanRVA. The intent was to capture a range of perspectives on respondents' background and experience coordination or participating in PlanRVA's community engagement efforts; interests and aspirations related to community engagement with Richmond-area emergency management, transportation, and environmental planning; issues and concerns relevant to PlanRVA's current community engagement efforts; and insights for increasing awareness of and involvement in PlanRVA's public processes.

### Participants

The following organizations and groups were invited to participate in the survey assessment:

- PlanRVA staff
- Long Range Transportation Plan Contacts
- Localities Support
- Executive Roundtable
- Community Transportation Advisory Committee
- Emergency Management Alliance of Central VA
- RRTPO Technical Advisory Committee
- Regional Public Information Officers
- RRTPO Policy Board
- PDC Commissioners
- Environmental Technical Advisory Committee

### Assessment Questions

#### Background Information

1. Please indicate which organization or jurisdiction you are affiliated with.
  - a. PlanRVA
  - b. City of Richmond
  - c. Hanover County
  - d. Town of Ashland

- e. Goochland County
  - f. Powhatan County
  - g. Chesterfield County
  - h. Henrico County
  - i. New Kent County
  - j. Charles City County
  - k. Other:
2. What is your role? Check all that apply.
- Elected Official
  - PlanRVA Staff Member
  - PlanRVA Board Member
  - PlanRVA Subcommittee Member
  - Staff at an Affiliated Governmental Agency
  - Planning Commissioner
  - Community Volunteer
  - Public Information Officer / Communications Officer
  - Other:

### Existing Community Engagement Strategies

3. How much experience have you had coordinating or participating in PlanRVA's efforts to involve the community in key decisions and priorities?
- None at all      A considerable amount
4. How much of your work is comprised of community engagement?
- None at all      A considerable amount
5. To what extent do you believe that PlanRVA has succeeded in engaging the public?
- Not at all successful      Very successful
6. What is an example of a successful community engagement by PlanRVA?
7. Which of these tools that PlanRVA is currently using is the most effective in engaging the Richmond region community?
- a. Surveys or Questionnaires on the PlanRVA Website
  - b. Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
  - c. YouTube Livestreams
  - d. Public Comment Periods
  - e. Other:
8. What makes this tool effective (e.g., ease of use, broad reach, engaging content)?

9. To what extent does PlanRVA ensure that its content is available in multiple languages?

Not at all      To a great extent

10. To what extent does PlanRVA ensure that a diverse range of community members are engaged?

Not at all      To a great extent

11. To what extent does PlanRVA ensure the community members that are engaged are representative of the Richmond region population?

Not at all      To a great extent

### Interests and Aspirations

12. Which of the following are core to PlanRVA's mission and work? Check all that apply.

- a. Funding and grants management
- b. Community involvement and engagement
- c. Liaising between state and local governments
- d. Strategic planning for regional transportation, emergency management, and environmental issues
- e. Collecting and maintaining regional modeling, data, maps, and GIS
- f. Do not know
- g. Other:

13. Who are the target audiences that PlanRVA should be engaging that are not currently engaged?

14. What are the key moments or projects where PlanRVA needs to engage the community? Check all that apply.

- a. Regional funding decisions
- b. Regional planning efforts
- c. Commission, Board and Committee meetings
- d. Studies of issues affecting the region
- e. Other:

### Issues and Concerns

15. How might PlanRVA need to improve how it engages with the public?

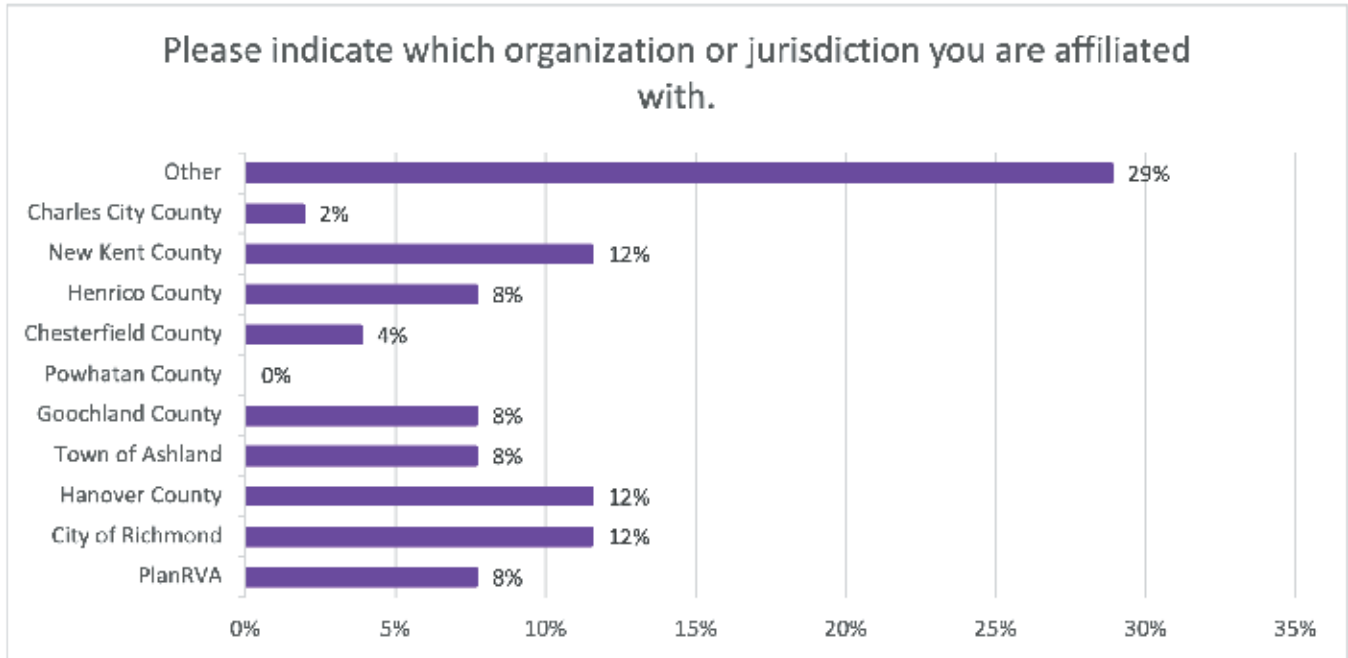
16. What hurdles or challenges might make community engagement more difficult for PlanRVA?

### Conclusion

17. Is there any other information that would be helpful to know as part of our assessment?

18. If you would like us to follow up with you directly for additional insights, please provide your name and email address and a member of our team will reach out; we will not disclose names associated with responses to PlanRVA.

## Survey Results

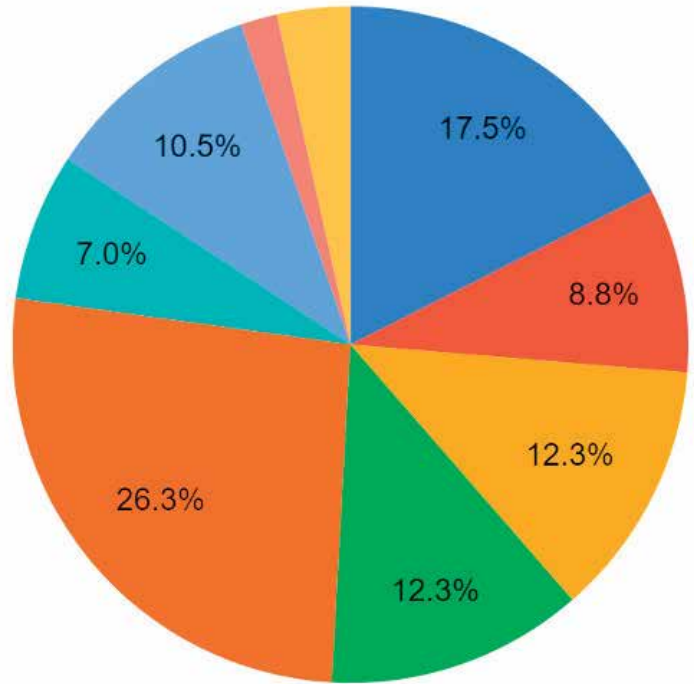


“Other” responses include:

- Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Senior Connections, The Capital Area Agency on Aging
- Williamsburg
- VCU - via CTAC
- ChamberRVA
- Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico, Richmond, New Kent, Ashland, Charles City
- Dept. of Transportation
- Small Business Administration
- Regional
- Tri-Cities Area MPO
- CultureWorks
- We represent the Asian community in Greater RVA Region at PlanRVA as an Advisor
- RMTA
- RideFinders
- A funder

### What is your role? Check all that apply. (51 responses)

- Other
- PlanRVA Subcommittee Member
- Community Volunteer
- Elected Official
- Staff at an Affiliated Governmental Agency
- Planning Commissioner
- PlanRVA Board Member
- PlanRVA Staff Member
- Public Information Officer / Communications Officer



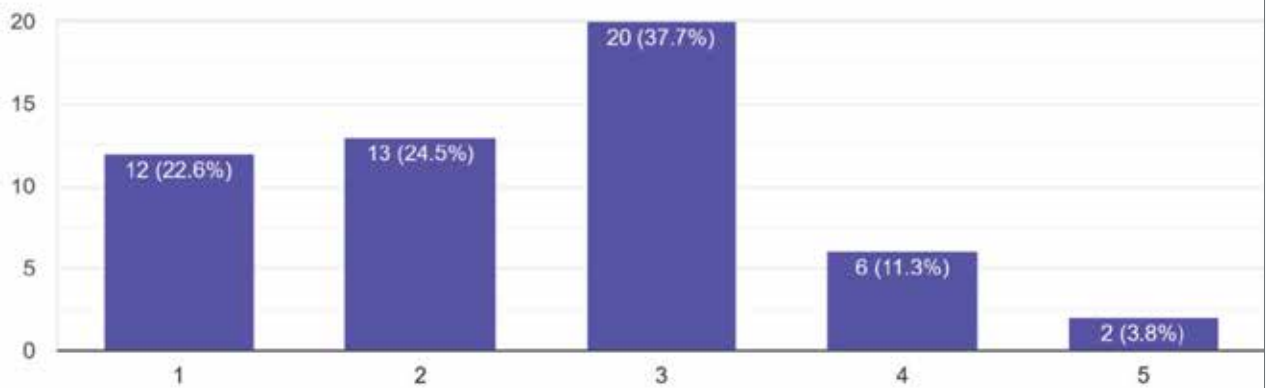
“Other” responses included:

- Executive
- Mobility Program Mgr., Senior Connections
- VCU representative
- Chamber staff
- Destination Marketing Organization
- Deputy Zoning Admin
- Nonprofit Leader
- CEO, non-profit
- MPO Director
- President
- Foundation staff

For the following multiple-choice questions, a Likert scale was used, with a higher number indicating either higher levels of experience or responsibility or stronger support for the question's prompt.

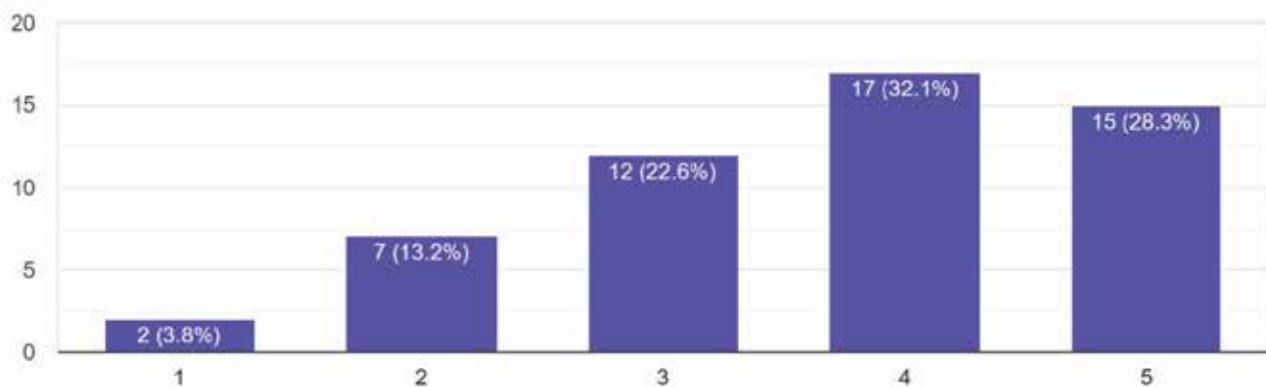
**How much experience have you had coordinating or participating in PlanRVA's efforts to involve the community in key decisions and priorities?**

53 responses



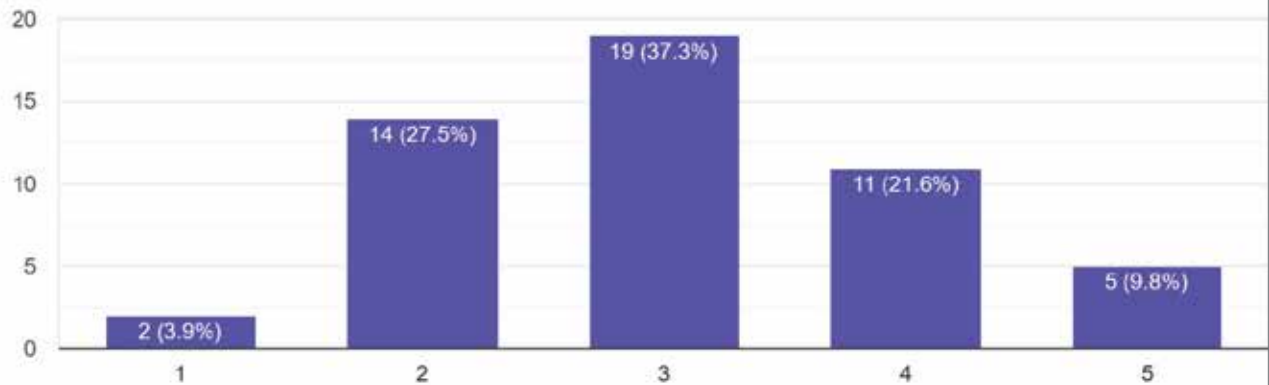
**How much of your work is comprised of community engagement?**

53 responses

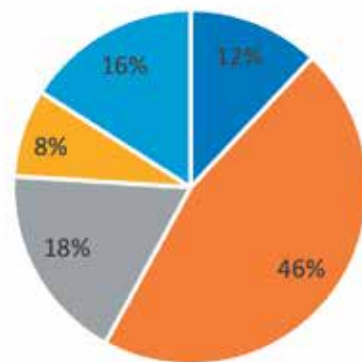


### To what extent do you believe that PlanRVA has succeeded in engaging the public?

51 responses



### Which of these tools that PlanRVA is currently using is the most effective in engaging the Richmond region community? (50 responses)



- Surveys and questionnaires on PlanRVA website
- Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- YouTube Livestreams
- Public Comment Periods
- Other

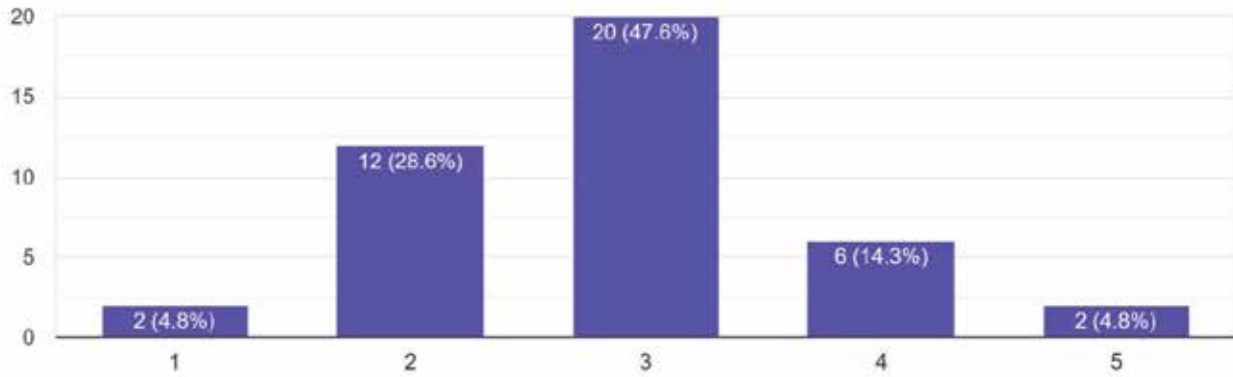
“Other” responses include:

- I do not know.
- Martha [Heeter, PlanRVA Executive Director] personally engaged in a number of key groups
- Having a PlanRVA member have a Town Meeting
- all are necessary
- I cannot adequately answer this question since I don't have access to the data showing the interaction.
- I have limited knowledge of what you use
- attendance of local events with exhibit table



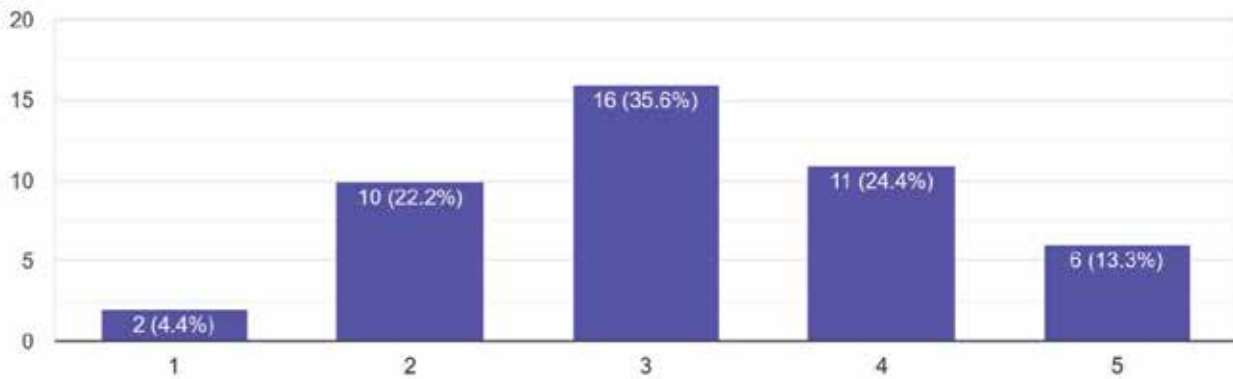
To what extent does PlanRVA ensure that its content is available in multiple languages

42 responses



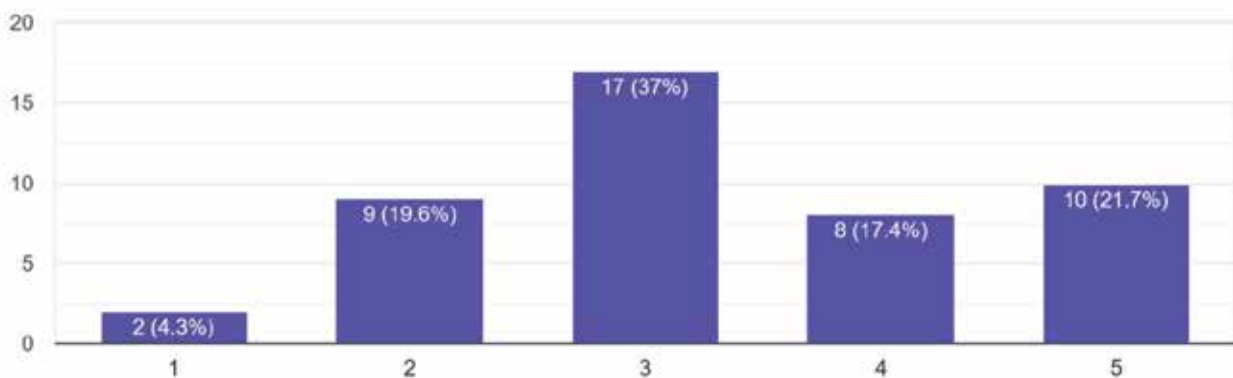
To what extent does PlanRVA ensure that a diverse range of community members are engaged?

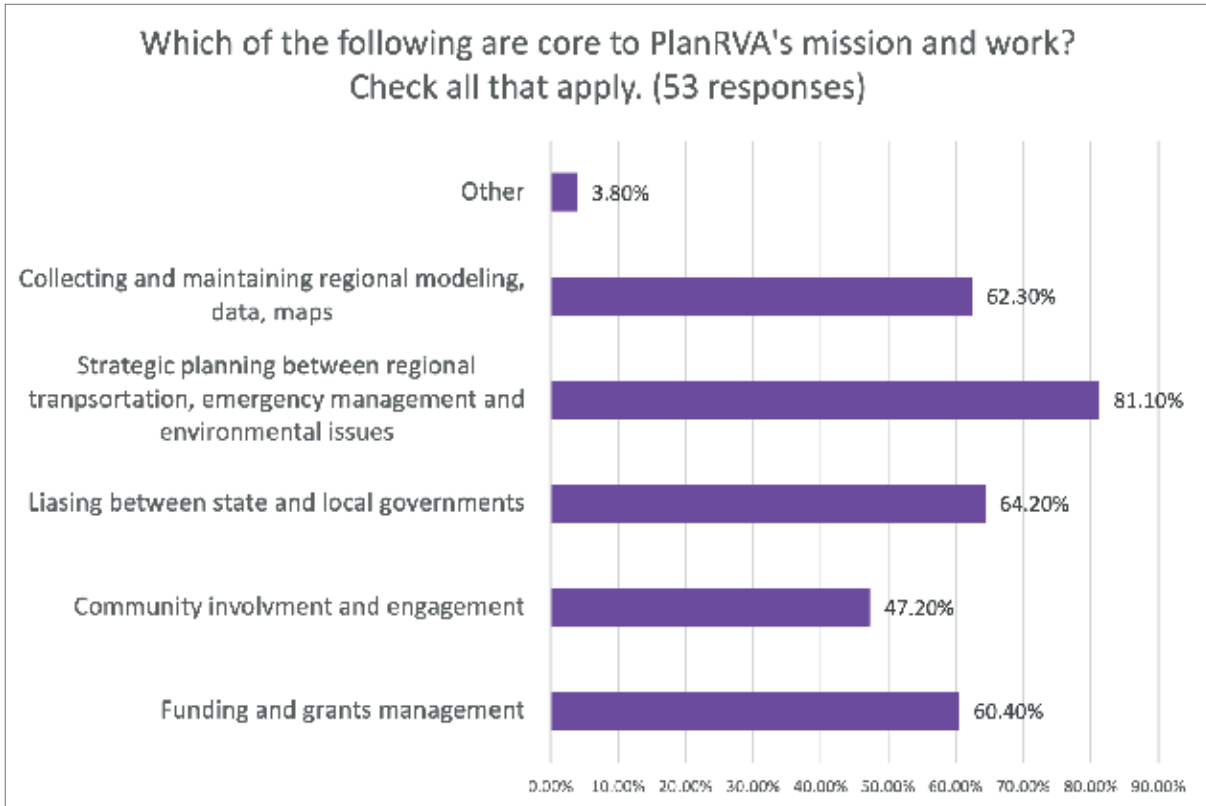
45 responses



To what extent does PlanRVA ensure the community members that are engaged are representative of the Richmond region population?

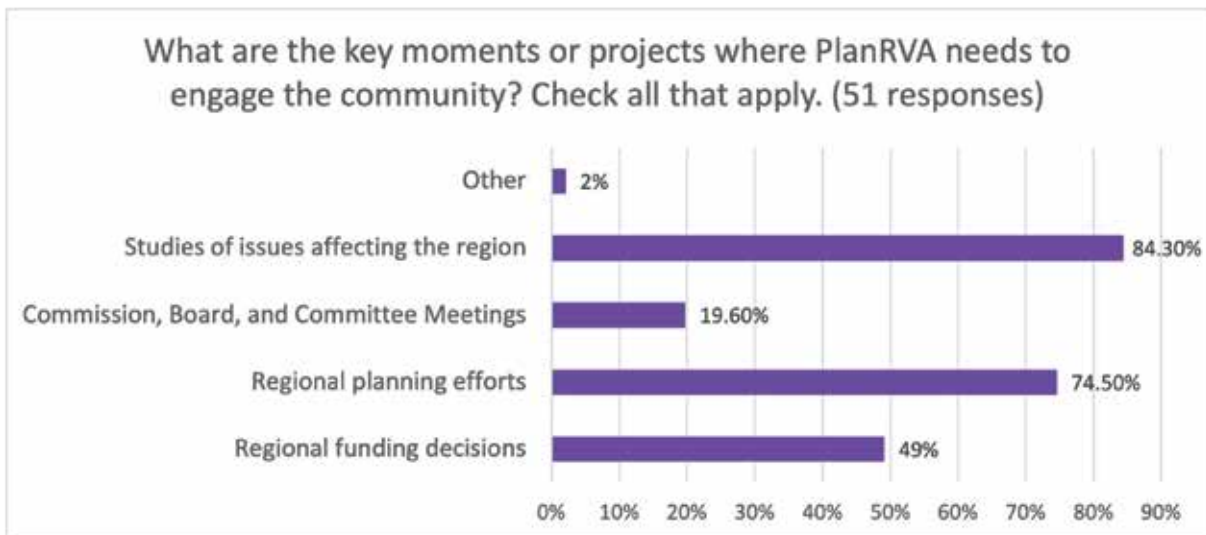
46 responses





“Other” responses included:

- I do not know
- CVTA Meetings



The “Other” response references:

- Engagement needs to be focused on their regional customers, so they have a clear understanding of the services they provide.

## Appendix E: Planning Templates

- [Smart Sheet template](#) on stakeholder mapping and analysis.
- See the International Association for Public Participation's [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) as a useful tool
- [This template from the City of Calgary](#) provides a useful checklist to use at the start of any engagement initiative.