Public Works
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS

EQUITY IN INFRASTRUCTURE SUMMIT

EVENT SUMMARY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026

Acknowledgements

We are deeply grateful to the community members, community-based organizations (CBOs), agency partners, and County staff who gave their time, honest insights, and trust to help make the Equity Summit a meaningful opportunity for advancing equity in infrastructure. The Equity in Infrastructure Initiative team will endeavor to meaningfully address and incorporate the feedback that attendees thoughtfully shared during the Summit to ensure that infrastructure and community outcomes are measurably improved over time.

We also give special thanks to ARDI and the five anchor CBOs who assisted with the design and planning of the Summit and whose continuous partnership has enabled the Equity in Infrastructure Initiative to continuously understand and align itself with community needs. Their guidance on the breakout discussion questions, discussion format, accessibility considerations, and various other aspects of the Summit helped ensure that our gathering could foster partnerships that aid effective implementation of this Initiative.

- Active San Gabriel Valley
- Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
- East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice
- Pacoima Beautiful
- Strategic Actions for a Just Economy

Public Works looks forward to building on the lessons learned during the Summit as the Equity in Infrastructure Initiative transitions into implementation planning for the Equity Framework.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2021, the Board passed a motion entitled, "Addressing Infrastructure Inequity," which directed Los Angeles County Public Works (Public Works), in partnership with Los Angeles County Anti-Racism, Diversity, and Inclusion Initiative (ARDI) and other County departments, to advance anti-racism efforts in Public Works' infrastructure investments. In response, Public Works created an **Equity in Infrastructure Framework** (Framework), which was developed through years of community engagement and partnership, internal assessments of existing policies and procedures, and a desire to reexamine how equity was communicated, emphasized, and demonstrated within Public Works' work culture, training, and service. The final Framework was submitted to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in December 2025.

The Framework outlines the six priorities and 46 strategies which will guide Public Works over the next five years to reduce inequities and improve the well-being of all Los Angeles County communities. Community engagement was central to the development of the Framework, and Public Works recognized that it needed to continue its relationships with community partners through the planning of equity implementation efforts to ensure ongoing feedback and to maintain its commitment to accountability.

On June 3, 2026, Public Works hosted the Equity in Infrastructure Summit (Summit) at the Magic Johnson Recreation Center. The Summit brought together approximately 100 representatives from community-based organizations (CBO), partner agencies, County departments, as well as other public stakeholders to help shape how the Equity in Infrastructure Initiative will be planned, implemented, evaluated, and improved over time. Through two facilitated breakout sessions, a large group discussion with all attendees, and notetaking completed by Summit staff at each discussion table, the Summit generated over 900 individual pieces of feedback that addressed various stages of infrastructure planning and delivery.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The feedback shared was categorized in two ways. Comments were categorized first according to the Equity Framework priorities that they spoke to. Comments were then categorized using major themes that were identified from breakout group discussions. These steps were taken to better understand trends in the feedback, such as which priorities or themes attendees were most interested in discussing. The Equity Framework priority that attendees spoke to most often was Community Engagement and Partnership. Community Engagement, Communication and Transparency, and Partnership and Collaboration were the major themes most frequently commented on during discussions.

~100 Summit Attendees

26 Community Based Organizations

7 County Departments

3 Outside Agencies

901 Pieces of Feedback Collected

10 Major Themes Identified

64% Feedback Tied to Community Engagement & Partnership

At a glance, stakeholders frequently voiced a desire for implementation to take place as part of a sustained relationship with the communities that Public Works serves. Looking more closely at specific recommendations, attendees emphasized the importance of communicating transparently and in plain language, the need for early and sustained engagement throughout each project's life cycle, the critical need for meaningful community partnership during implementation of equity initiatives, and the call for accountability in the Framework's commitments.

During initial implementation planning, Public Works will prioritize Framework strategies connected to Community Engagement & Partnership that build the agency's capacity to understand community needs, and align implementation with those needs. Public Works will also publish its first Annual Equity Framework Progress Report in January 2026 to provide an update on its Framework implementation plan and the progress it has made.

EVENT OVERVIEW

The Equity in Infrastructure Summit was designed, in partnership with ARDI and community-based organizations, to bring County infrastructure and community stakeholders together with Public Works staff to help shape the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the Equity in Infrastructure Initiative (Initiative) and the Public Works Equity Framework.

The Summit's goal was to build a strong, accountable, and trusted foundation for the Initiative through collaborative partnership, equitable implementation, and sustained dialogue. Attendees included community-based organizations, non-profit and advocacy organizations, local residents, partner infrastructure agencies, and other County departments such as the Chief Sustainability Office, Department of Regional Planning, and the Department of Public Health.

EVENT OVERVIEW

The Equity Summit centered group discussion as its primary method of engagement. Attendees participated in a series of facilitated discussions at assigned tables, and each table had a dedicated Public Works facilitator and notetaker. Attendees were assigned to tables to ensure diversity in perspective and representation across different types of organizations.

Public Works staff at the event were also drawn from all of Public Works' Business Areas in order to ensure a vast array of expertise in areas related to infrastructure planning, design, project management, and infrastructure maintenance; community outreach; workforce support; and contracting. Public Works wanted to ensure that there would be staff onsite who could speak to the diverse interests of the Summit attendees, while also providing staff with an opportunity to hear directly from community members about what equity in infrastructure looks like to them.

The Summit was the first large-scale opportunity for community members, CBOs, and partner agencies to react directly to the final Framework strategies and provide feedback on how those strategies should be implemented. The Summit was also treated as a co-learning opportunity for Public Works staff and as a way to operationalize the strategies that are identified in the Framework. Feedback gathered at the Summit is intended to directly inform how Framework strategies are prioritized, sequenced, and linked to specific implementation actions.

EVENT AGENDA

The Summit took place from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM and followed the agenda below:

8:00 - 9:00 AM | Registration and Networking Breakfast
Attendees checked in, networked, and had an opportunity to review the final Equity Framework which was available at all tables.

9:00 - 9:30 AM | Opening Remarks
Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell welcomed attendees to LA County's Second District and framed the importance of addressing equity in infrastructure investment, particularly for addressing the needs of historically underinvested communities. She also invited Summit attendees to discuss the question, "What does inclusion look like and feel like to you?"

9:30 - 10:00 AM | Public Works Director's Welcome and Framework Overview
Director Mark Pestrella spoke to Public Works' commitment to advancing equity in infrastructure. Public Works Assistant Deputy Director TJ Moon then presented the final Equity Framework strategies and explained how community feedback would be incorporated before transitioning attendees into breakout sessions.

10:00 - 10:45 AM | Breakout Session #1 "Building a Foundation"
The first round of small group discussions, each facilitated by two Public Works staff, began. Each table explored what strong and inclusive planning should look like from the start of implementation, what priorities should guide implementation early on, and where there could be opportunities for partnership in shaping the work from the beginning. Attendees were instructed to capture their thoughts on sticky notes and then discuss the feedback as a group. Staff collected sticky notes for sorting later during the event.

EVENT AGENDA

11:00 - 11:45 AM | Breakout Session #2 "Equitable Implementation and Evaluation
The second round of small group discussions began. Each table discussed how the Initiative can be implemented and evaluated in a way that is equitable, coordinated, and accountable over time. The discussions addressed barriers to effective implementation, conditions that support implementation, the unique needs of each community, and partnership opportunities that support implementation and evaluation over time. Again, sticky notes were used to capture information, along with information written by each table's assigned notetaker.

11:45 - 12:00 PM | Overview of Discussion Themes and Recap
Facilitators and attendees co-identified common themes and recommendations from Breakout Session #2 and connected them back to Breakout Session #1.

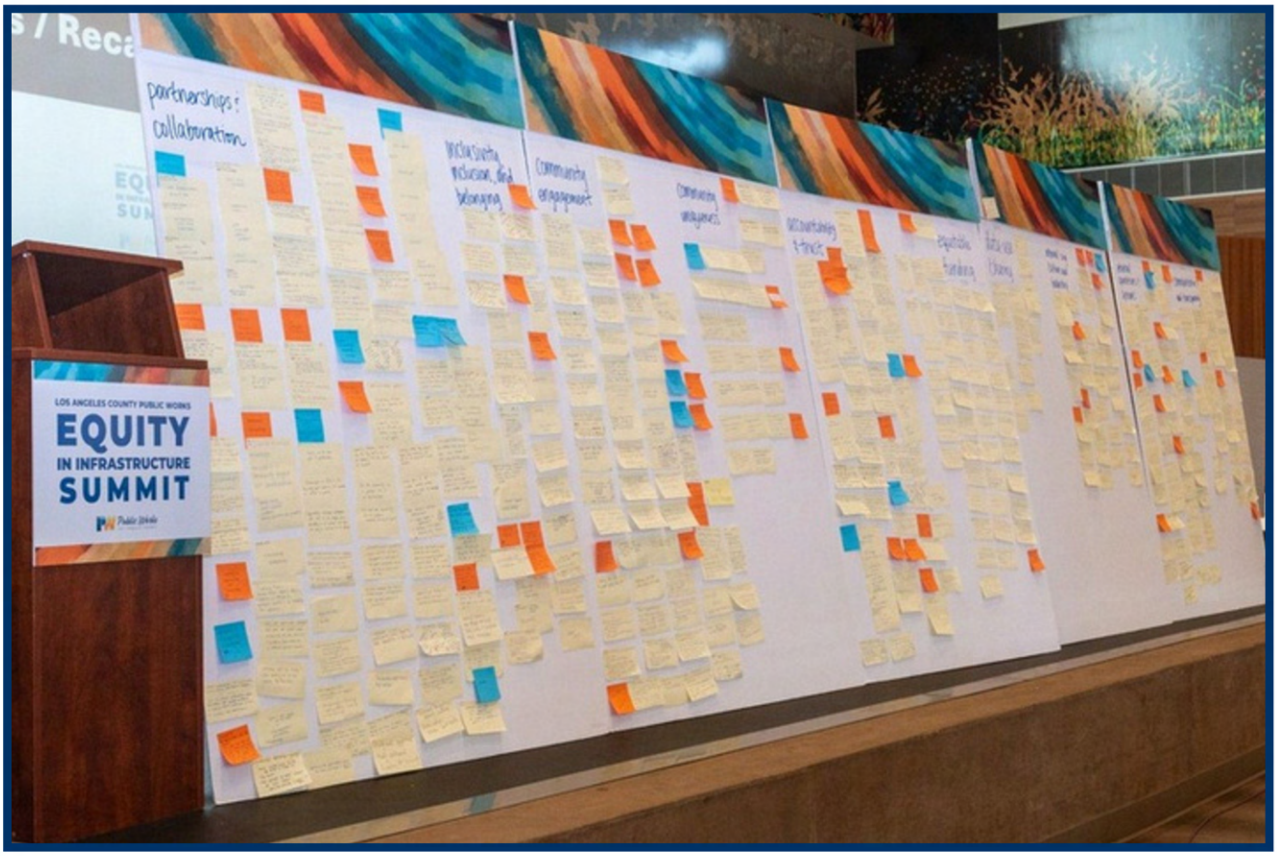
12:00 - 1:00 PM | Networking Lunch
As participants had lunch and conversed, facilitators and notetakers worked together to identify major themes across all the breakout group discussions. Summit staff created visual display boards with sections labeled by major themes. Sticky notes with attendees' comments were arranged on the display boards according to the major themes they were most closely related to.

1:00 - 2:00 PM | Large Group Discussion and Next Steps
This portion of the Summit was facilitated by Carolyn Verheyen, a Principal of MIG, Inc., who was involved in the development of the Framework. All attendees were invited to review and discuss the thematic feedback display boards as a large group. Additional feedback was collected from attendees during this discussion. The Summit closed with a presentation of steps that Public Works would take to incorporate stakeholder feedback collected during the Summit.

FEEDBACK COLLECTION

The **two breakout sessions** produced most of the feedback that we analyzed for this report. Each breakout group had an average of five attendees, as well as two Public Works staff acting as notetakers and facilitators. Facilitators used prompts targeting the focus of each breakout session to guide the discussions, while notetakers captured stakeholder comments and high-level themes in real time on sticky notes. This format was chosen to ensure attendees were able to share targeted and actionable feedback.

The visual displays then reflected back to attendees what was heard during the breakout sessions. This gave attendees an opportunity to clarify or expand on the comments they shared to ensure that Public Works had an accurate understanding of the feedback. It also provided attendees with an opportunity to hear about discussions at other tables and see the unifying themes that emerged. The major themes presented during the large group discussion were then used to conduct the analysis presented in this report.



EQUITY FRAMEWORK

The Equity Framework organizes Public Works' equity work into six priority areas, each with its own set of strategies that are either already underway or newly proposed for the next five years. Attendees were provided with digital copies of the Framework prior to the Summit and physical copies of the Equity Framework at each table.

The Summit's breakout questions, and the feedback captured in response to them, map directly onto these **six priorities**:

1. **Community Engagement and Partnership:**
   Work closely with residents, local Native communities, and Tribal governments to form lasting relationships to make sure that infrastructure projects meet the needs of the communities they serve.

2. **Use of Data**
   Track results to promote fair outcomes for all LA County communities, share the data openly, and work with communities to make improvements.

3. **Workforce Diversity and Inclusion**
   Diversify the Public Works workforce with respect to gender, race and ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity, as well as diversity of experience and skills. Ensure that diverse staff perspectives and experiences are recognized and considered in decision making.

4. **Policy and Practice**
   Ensure Public Works' policies and practices advance equity both within Department operations and in the services we provide to Los Angeles County communities.

5. **Intra- and Inter-Agency Collaboration:**
   Strengthen collaboration within Public Works and with other County departments to better serve the community.

6. **Organizational Culture**
   Foster a workplace culture where all employees feel safe, valued, and empowered to contribute to equity.

MAJOR THEMES

During the Equity Summit, notetaking and facilitation staff reviewed the breakout session comments and identified **ten major themes** that reflected ideas frequently shared by attendees. These major themes were used to sort sticky note comments and staff notes to determine how frequently community members spoke to each theme. The themes are listed and defined below:

1

Community Engagement

The feedback in this thematic category related to the ways in which County agencies should engage community members in dialogue about its infrastructure and services. Suggestions included better inter-agency and cross-departmental coordination, as well as reducing barriers to community participation at outreach events.

2

Communication and Transparency

This theme centered on ways in which services, processes, policies, investments, and decisions are shared with community members. The underlying takeaway was that communication needs to be both clear and accessible. This theme is also related to the availability of information, and frequency of communications.

3

Partnerships and Collaboration

Attendees emphasized the importance of sustained collaboration between Public Works and community partners, other County departments, and other public stakeholders to ensure the delivery of equitable infrastructure and services. The feedback encouraged Public Works to view community partnership as a valuable resource for leveraging specialized community-focused knowledge and experience.

4

Accountability and Trust

This theme entailed the actions needed to build a sense of community trust and accountability around Public Works' commitments to equitable infrastructure and service delivery. There was a notable overlap with the other themes of Communication and Transparency as well as sustained Community Engagement.

MAJOR THEMES

5

Inclusivity and Belonging

The focus of this theme was on how to ensure that services and infrastructure feel welcoming and that community members feel meaningfully included in decision making. Feedback from attendees emphasized relationship building and planning for accessibility in events.

6

Internal Operations and Systems

Comments collected spoke to how internal County systems and structures support or constrain equitable infrastructure, service delivery, and community partnership.

7

Organization Culture and Leadership

Comments emphasized the importance of staff mindsets, values, common practices, and leadership buy-in that sustain equity work over time. There was also an emphasis on promoting employee diversity to ensure adequate representation and a reflection of the communities served.

8

Equitable Funding

Gathered feedback emphasized the importance of establishing dedicated funds to support community engagement, and the need to equitably prioritize infrastructure projects and maintenance.

9

Data Use and Sharing

This theme is about how data can be collected, used, and shared to support equitable decision making. Attendees urged us to consider community-gathered information in decision making and also called for greater data transparency.

10

Community Uniqueness

The ideas contained within this thematic category point to the need to recognize and address the specific needs, histories, and experiences of each community. This builds upon the importance of representation, valuing lived experiences, and engaging communities with respect and receptiveness.

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

In this section, we provide an overview of all feedback collected across sticky note comments written in response to the breakout discussion questions, notes written by notetakers throughout the discussions, and comments shared during the large group discussion. We define and provide examples for major discussion themes and each of their most closely related sub-themes. Sub-themes encompassed practices, policies, or procedures that attendees provided as actionable recommendations for implementing actions related to each major theme.

We collected a total of **901 comments** across all 3 sources. We reviewed each comment and categorized it according to the major themes and sub-themes that it was most closely related to. We also categorized comments according to their relevance to Equity Framework priorities:

- **761 comments** spoke to specific breakout session themes ("Major Themes")
- **140 comments** spoke to specific outcomes or opportunity areas (e.g., housing or green spaces) that attendees wanted prioritized rather than Major Themes

The pyramid diagram below lists themes in descending order based on how often each theme came up during discussions. Each pyramid tier contains pairs of themes that were brought up at similar frequencies. For example, Community Engagement and Communication and Transparency in the topmost tier were the most frequently discussed themes at 286 and 279 mentions, respectively.

DISCUSSION OF THEME FREQUENCY

We found that looking at the number of times that each theme was spoken about was helpful for understanding how strongly attendees felt that each theme should be considered.

***Note**: Our analysis revealed that community comments often overlapped with multiple themes and priorities. For example, a comment about translating materials into multiple languages is relevant to both themes of Communication and Transparency and Inclusivity and Belonging. In our analysis, the sample comment above was counted in each applicable category. As such, the listed theme percentages will exceed 100% if added all together. We found that this approach allowed us to account for the complexity and intersecting nature of each comment.*

Please refer to the following Feedback Analysis section for a more in-depth discussion of how community feedback relates to Equity Framework priorities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement encompassed feedback that addressed how Public Works and other infrastructure agencies could reach out to community members, create opportunities for community members to provide feedback, and involve community members in decision-making processes. Attendees highlighted the importance of creating community feedback opportunities that are accessible, ensuring that communities are equitably represented in community feedback settings, and coordinating community engagement efforts across Public Works and partner agencies that are also working towards advancing equity in infrastructure. There were 286 comments that addressed Community Engagement, making it the major theme that attendees most frequently spoke to.

286 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Create Accessible Dialogue Opportunities

Attendees stressed the importance of making community feedback opportunities accessible and inclusive by ensuring community members have the support they need to participate. They proposed community feedback meeting enhancements such as providing for childcare, transportation, and food. They also proposed the creation of satellite offices and pop-up events that make it easier for community members to speak with knowledgeable staff from local infrastructure departments or agencies. An attendee summarized this major theme in stating, "*Community engagement should be conducted in a way that meets the needs and expectations of the intended community; meet people where they are.*"

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sub-Theme: Coordinate Community Engagement Efforts Across Departments, Agencies, and Partners

Attendees encouraged Public Works and other infrastructure agencies with similar goals to coordinate when there is a need for engagement in the same communities. They explained that doing so can help community members by reducing fatigue from attending numerous community meetings, mitigating the difficulty of fitting community meetings into their schedules, and ensuring that a wider range of knowledgeable staff are present to answer questions. One attendee proposed, "*Think of the County holistically and define success at a County level*," as one approach to coordinating community engagement efforts across departments.

Sub-Theme: Ensure Equitable Representation

Attendees supported the prioritization of outreach to underrepresented communities and CBOs that do not have existing relationships with infrastructure agencies and departments. One attendee noted that organizations should "*understand that the loudest voices don't always reflect that of those with the highest needs*" in order to ensure that the needs of all community members are met.

"Treat community members as experts of their community."

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Community stakeholders addressed Communication and Transparency in terms of the kinds of information that departments and agencies communicate to the public, as well as how accessible that information is to the populations that they serve. Attendees commented on topics including language accessibility and whether residents are informed about how decisions that impact them are made. Attendees also asked whether efforts to communicate with residents are sustained, rather than one-off, and underscored the importance of communication in building trust over time. A total of 279 comments addressed this theme, making it the second most frequently addressed theme.

279 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Use of Accessible Language

Attendees frequently asked Public Works to translate messages and materials provided to the public that contain information about the department into other languages for non-English speakers. This was suggested to help reach community members who speak languages other than English directly, as well as to provide community-based organizations with outreach materials that are accessible to a wider range of residents. Attendees also encouraged Public Works to use plain and widely accessible language without jargon in communications with stakeholders. For example, one attendee remarked, "*Don't use acronyms, ever.*"

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

Sub-Theme: Making Internal Processes Transparent
Attendees asked Public Works to share more information about how internal decisions get made and how investments are prioritized. One attendee encouraged the department to examine the visibility of its decision-making processes, asking, "*Is the process listed publicly, such as online? Does the agency or department host public info sessions or office hours? Is there anyone whose job it is to share out about this process?*" Attendees also asked Public Works to provide public dashboards where they could view the statuses of infrastructure projects, provide feedback on those projects, and check in over time for progress reports.

Sub-Theme: Understanding and Documenting Lived Experiences and Histories
Attendees uplifted the importance of the County acknowledging the inequities and burdens that community members experience as a result of past decisions made without community input. One attendee commented, "*Acknowledging the past failures and decisions the County has made without community input can help build trust.*" Attendees urged Public Works to document how community members have experienced its infrastructure and use those personal histories as a guide for more equitable decision making moving forward.

"Invite partners, like at this Summit, to discuss what they are hearing from the community and/or periodic updates on projects in the works."

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Partnerships and Collaboration encompassed comments that identified opportunities for establishing formal relationships and collaborative initiatives between departments, infrastructure agencies, CBOs, and community members. There were 263 comments gathered related to this theme, making it the third most frequently addressed major theme. Notably, comments about Partnerships and Collaboration overlapped with many of the other themes. Opportunities for Partnerships and Collaboration, as a result, often appear in this report's discussions of other major themes.

263 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Inter-Agency and Inter-Departmental Collaboration

Attendees frequently suggested breaking down silos between County departments and infrastructure agencies. One attendee elaborated on this suggestion in the following comment: "*De-silo infrastructure: Between departments, between cities, and between issues. We cannot just focus on one issue; fire is not the only major threat, but so is water supply and extreme heat.*" This suggestion was aimed at reducing the amount of coordination that communities might otherwise need to do in order to have their infrastructure needs met.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Sub-Theme: Community Empowerment

Attendees encouraged Public Works to empower CBOs and community members by creating opportunities for them to be directly involved in developing solutions to infrastructure inequities. One attendee, who suggested formalizing these opportunities as part of a partnership, commented, "*Community partnership from ideation, planning, design, and implementation: CBO's can help come up with innovations.*" Several attendees also emphasized that CBOs are important liaisons and community ambassadors. They highlighted that CBOs can serve as a vital bridge to community members, particularly those who may not feel comfortable engaging with government representatives or who may not be reachable through existing outreach methods.

"See each community as a partner, not as an inconvenience."

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRUST

Accountability and Trust referred to the idea that public trust is shaped by the ways in which infrastructure agencies, like Public Works, share information about their operations and services. Attendees emphasized that demonstrating accountability by providing continuous updates, particularly regarding infrastructure projects, to communities builds trust in an organization's capacity to honor its commitments. There were 211 comments speaking to this theme.

211 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Transparency of Data and Decisions

Attendees frequently mentioned the role that data and measurable outcomes can play in helping the public understand how decisions are made and what goals those decisions are meant to accomplish. One attendee explained this point in the following way: "*Transparency is critical; objectives aren't clearly stated up front. Need for communication to community, emphasizing aligning community needs with design.*" Attendees also suggested that data can be a tool for developing shared goals with community members, keeping community members informed on why certain goals are set, and demonstrating whether organizations are making progress towards those goals. Another attendee recognized that data could help clarify misunderstandings that the public might have about the feasibility of solutions for reducing infrastructure inequities. They stated, "*Be honest with the no's and the why, to build trust with transparency, versus just highlighting the wins and sugarcoating. Tell the community facts and data so they understand the reality.*"

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRUST

Sub-Theme: Maintain Continuous Accountability
Attendees stressed the importance of creating resources and opportunities that enable community members to participate in infrastructure agency accountability processes. Examples of resources and opportunities that were shared included community advisory committees and performance indicators with explanations for what they mean. One attendee specifically suggested "*yearly evaluation, grading, or score card, similar to restaurants, using a third party focusing on infrastructure.*"

Sub-Theme: Follow-Through on Feedback
A common suggestion that attendees provided for improving accountability and public trust was demonstrating follow-through on commitments and community feedback. Attendees pointed out that some form of follow-through should occur at least after a project is concluded and after community feedback is gathered. One attendee stressed that trust can be further strengthened if updates are provided on a routine and scheduled basis. Elaborating on this point, the attendee suggested, "*Honesty over being ghosted; if there are no updates, just say that instead of not responding to emails.*"

"Accountability looks like regular updates to the public in plain language that keeps Public Works accountable to the Framework."

INCLUSIVITY AND BELONGING

Inclusivity and Belonging encompassed comments that focused on creating accessible opportunities for community participation in decision-making and relationship building that create a sense of belonging between community members and Public Works staff. A total of 165 comments spoke to this major theme.

165 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Address Accessibility Needs

Attendees frequently raised accessibility considerations, particularly in relation to community engagement efforts. They emphasized that for community engagement efforts to be effective and inviting, community members must feel like they can physically and practically take part in those efforts. Accessibility considerations that were named included community meeting times, meeting locations, and transit access. One attendee defined accountability in their comment, which stated, "*Accountability: When and where meetings are, what time of day, is it transit accessible, are there multiple dates, is there childcare, is it somewhere the community already gathers?*"

Attendees also pointed out the need to acknowledge and address cultural and language barriers that communities might face when they try to learn more about what infrastructure agencies do. For example, attendees suggested converting technical language into more generalized and understandable concepts for community members. They also support the practice of translating informational materials into the written and spoken languages of communities that are being reached out to.

INCLUSIVITY AND BELONGING

Sub-Theme: Build Inclusive Community Relationships
Attendees stressed the importance of building lasting relationships between County staff and community members that convey an authentic desire to engage in dialogue with each other over time. One suggestion from an attendee was to provide staff with dedicated work hours where they participated in community engagement opportunities, such as outreach events. When asked what inclusivity might feel like in the context of community engagement, one attendee responded that "*inclusivity feels like relationships*."

"Unincorporated areas without CBOs get overlooked. Ensure every community is included."

INTERNAL OPERATIONS AND SYSTEMS

Attendees provided recommendations on Public Works' internal operations and systems. This theme referred to the staffing strategies, regulations, interdepartmental coordination procedures, and prioritization processes that shape how the department provides infrastructure and services. Attendees voiced the need for information about how Public Works operates internally in order to provide more targeted guidance on how the department can meet each community's needs. There were 157 comments that addressed this theme.

157 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Staffing and Institutional Knowledge

Comments predominantly encouraged County departments to ensure stable staffing capacity for equity efforts and to ensure institutional knowledge of communities is preserved, particularly when staffing changes occur. Attendees highlighted the challenge of preserving institutional knowledge as County staff are continuously promoted or transferred. They encouraged the County to dedicate and equip staff to build relationships with communities and preserve the department's knowledge about the unique needs of each community to ensure they are represented in decision making. One attendee described this challenge in terms of "*the size, scale, and complexity of LA County (including 9 supervisors) and how equitable representation will happen.*"

INTERNAL OPERATIONS AND SYSTEMS

Sub-Theme: Addressing Regulatory Barriers
Attendees highlighted the importance of addressing barriers to partnerships between CBOs and the County. One attendee, who pointed to insurance requirements as an area for potential improvement, stated, "*Insurance requirements are too high and often not applicable to the scope of work.*" CBO partners also expressed a desire for a streamlined contracting process that reduces requirements for non-profits to carry out small-scale infrastructure improvements, such as tree trimming and painting traffic signal control boxes.

Sub-Theme: Breaking Down Silos Across Departments
Attendees wanted to see County departments and partner agencies identify opportunities for coordination, within their organizations and across organizations, when they are working towards similar goals. One attendee summarized this theme with the following comment: "*County ecosystem acts as individual players but have similar wants for similar outcomes; we should connect our focuses.*"

"Plan for: The here and now, 10-25 years, and 50-100 years with a multigenerational lens."

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Similarly to the theme of Internal Operations and Systems, this theme examined the impact of internal systems and values on preparing staff to meaningfully engage communities in equity work. Specific topics that were highlighted included workforce diversity, workforce culture, and how leadership commitment to advancing equity can contribute to lasting organizational change. A total of 105 comments addressed this theme.

105 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Workforce Diversity

A topic that was frequently addressed was the workforce diversity of departments and agencies that provide infrastructure and related services to County residents. Attendees emphasized that building a workforce that reflects the lived experiences and demographics of the communities they serve could help agencies like Public Works achieve more equitable outcomes. For example, one comment highlighted the importance of hiring staff who speak the languages spoken by the residents that they serve. This comment stated, "*Hiring people who have the lived experience to represent the community, especially in language; someone from the community, or at least looking like community.*" Other comments added that focusing on local hiring could contribute to achieving this goal.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Sub-Theme: Commitment to Equity

Attendees highlighted the importance of fostering a commitment to advancing equity at all levels of each infrastructure agency, ranging from frontline staff that regularly interact with residents to executive leaders that set their organization's goals and policies. One comment related to this sub-theme stated, "*Goal alignment, from upper management all the way down to the lowest level, so that everyone is on the same pathway.*" Attendees suggested that achieving goal alignment would likely require a broad culture shift.

"Push beyond the status quo. Maybe a code or policy no longer applies. Question whether those "rules" are still relevant."

EQUITABLE FUNDING

Equitable Funding referred to the idea that infrastructure agencies should tailor their investments and budget priorities to the specific needs of each community that they serve. Topics related to this theme that attendees discussed included how infrastructure projects are prioritized, policies on compensation for CBO engagement, and dedicated budgeting for community engagement. There were 90 comments that addressed this theme.

90 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Funding Community Engagement Partnerships

Attendees indicated that one of their highest priorities with regards to Equitable Funding was ensuring that CBOs were financially compensated in a timely manner for the support and services that they provide to County agencies. Community engagement assistance was most frequently mentioned as a service that CBOs should receive compensation for. One attendee specifically suggested that County-led community engagement efforts should prioritize "*paying CBOs who have on-the-ground trust and relationships.*" Attendees also suggested that funding should be set aside to create ample opportunities for a wide range of CBOs, rather than a select few, to engage the communities that they serve.

EQUITABLE FUNDING

Sub-Theme: Reduce Barriers to Partnership
Attendees suggested that the removal of barriers to partnership, particularly those associated with funding, should be prioritized. One attendee elaborated on this point, directing specific attention to opportunities to "*remove barriers for CBOs/NGOs to participate: grant applications, insurance requirements, administrative and fiscal needs/burdens.*" Confusing and challenging aspects of the contracting process, such as navigating insurance requirements, were highlighted.

Sub-Theme: Equitable Prioritization
The development of equity criteria that enable budget and infrastructure prioritization emerged as a priority. Attendees suggested that decisions regarding, for example, which infrastructure projects receive funding and infrastructure repair timelines should be informed by the demonstrated needs of each community. One attendee emphasized that communities experiencing high levels of need, particularly those that have accumulated disproportionate burdens because of historical disinvestment, should be prioritized. They stated, "*Communities that have been historically disinvested through redlining and exclusion, and who have suffered violence and harm, should be prioritized.*"

"Incorporate equity criteria when funding programs that Public Works oversees."

DATA USE AND SHARING

Attendee comments about Data Use and Sharing focused on how County agencies collect data, what kinds of data they collect, how they use data to inform decision making, and how it uses data to keep the public informed about its operations and outcomes. There were 88 comments collected related to this theme.

88 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Data-Informed Decision Making

Attendees emphasized the importance of using data for making informed decisions. These decisions may include which infrastructure projects are prioritized and how budget priorities are set. Specific emphasis was placed on treating community feedback as a meaningful data source alongside official census data and operational data collected by each agency. One comment that summarized this discussion stated, "*Determine benefits and challenges of reporting data versus community data and use that information to implement and evaluate programs along the way.*" Attendees suggested that these data sets could be synthesized into accessible reports and used to keep community members informed about how the decisions of infrastructure agencies like Public Works impact outcomes.

DATA USE AND SHARING

Sub-Theme: Customer-Focused Service Access
Attendees emphasized the importance of creating "*one-stop shop*" centers where residents can access and provide feedback on a variety of services. Residents could request immediate support for issues they are facing, regardless of which agency or department has the immediate authority to resolve those issues. One attendee described this approach as a "*no wrong door*" policy, which aims to reduce the number of times that residents are turned away or redirected to other departments or agencies. This approach would also ensure that customer service data, such as the amount of time taken to resolve service requests, can be funneled to the correct department or agency.

An attendee representing a CBO highlighted the importance of addressing this theme when they shared an experience with a streetlight located near their home that was out of service for numerous weeks. The outage affected residents, commuters, and a nearby school. The attendee inquired with multiple agencies about which agency was responsible for the repair, but the issue went unresolved. A facilitator was able to direct the attendee to the appropriate agency.

"Track progress over time in a way that is easily understandable and accessible for both staff and the public."

COMMUNITY UNIQUENESS

Community Uniqueness captured comments that addressed the idea of providing infrastructure, services, and solutions that are tailored to the distinct needs of each community. Comments related to this major theme encouraged Public Works and other infrastructure agencies to steer away from uniform solutions that may not be well-suited to addressing the challenges that every community faces. Attendees shared 85 comments related to this theme.

85 comments addressed this theme

Sub-Theme: Recognize Community Needs
Attendees voiced support for the idea that each community's unique infrastructure needs should be assessed, and that solutions should address the specific inequities that each community is facing. One attendee specifically suggested that Public Works should partner and work together with other infrastructure agencies to build "*neighborhood resilience, specific to communities.*"

Sub-Theme: Build Local Advocacy Capacity
Attendees suggested that ensuring equitable representation may require departments and agencies to help historically underrepresented communities build their capacity to advocate for their needs. One attendee proposed that departments and agencies could "*build opportunities for advocacy from groups involved, and be receptive*" to the wider range of challenges that may be identified as community advocacy efforts expand.

"Look holistically at community needs."

FEEDBACK ANALYSIS

This section provides a more detailed view of the feedback sorting that was done to evaluate how frequently Equity Framework priorities came up in discussions and identify major themes and sub-themes. The facilitation team worked during lunch to review and categorize all sticky note comments and notetaker documentation based on which Equity Framework priorities they spoke to. Doing this sorting allowed for real-time emergence of major discussion themes. Our subsequent analysis specifically looked at how frequently Summit themes were found in community feedback.

761
Comments

538
References

840
Equity Framework Priority References

Note on Theme and Priority Counts:
We looked at the 761 comments that connected to at least one major discussion theme and used the frequency with which each priority and theme were mentioned to create the figures below. We found that many comments were categorized under multiple priorities and themes at once, which highlighted that an effective approach to implementation would likely require addressing all six equity priorities simultaneously to some degree.

These overlaps are included in counts for each priority and theme. This means that the total number of instances when comments were categorized to priorities and themes is higher than the total number of comments collected. If an analyzed comment fell into two categories (e.g., both “Community Engagement” and “Communication and Transparency”), it was counted as a single entry in both categories.

For example, the one comment, "Consistently translate materials into other languages" was categorized and counted a total of three times under the following discussion theme categories:

- Community Engagement
- Communication and Transparency
- Inclusion and Belonging

EQUITY FRAMEWORK PRIORITIES

We found in our Equity Framework priority categorization that attendees spoke to Community Engagement and Partnership in their comments most frequently. There were 538 mentions of this Equity Framework priority, or 64% of the 840 instances when a comment was categorized under any Equity Framework priority. Our analysis highlighted that comments that were primarily connected to other themes, like Use of Data or Organizational Culture, were frequently framed in terms of their potential impact on Public Works' relationships with the communities it serves.

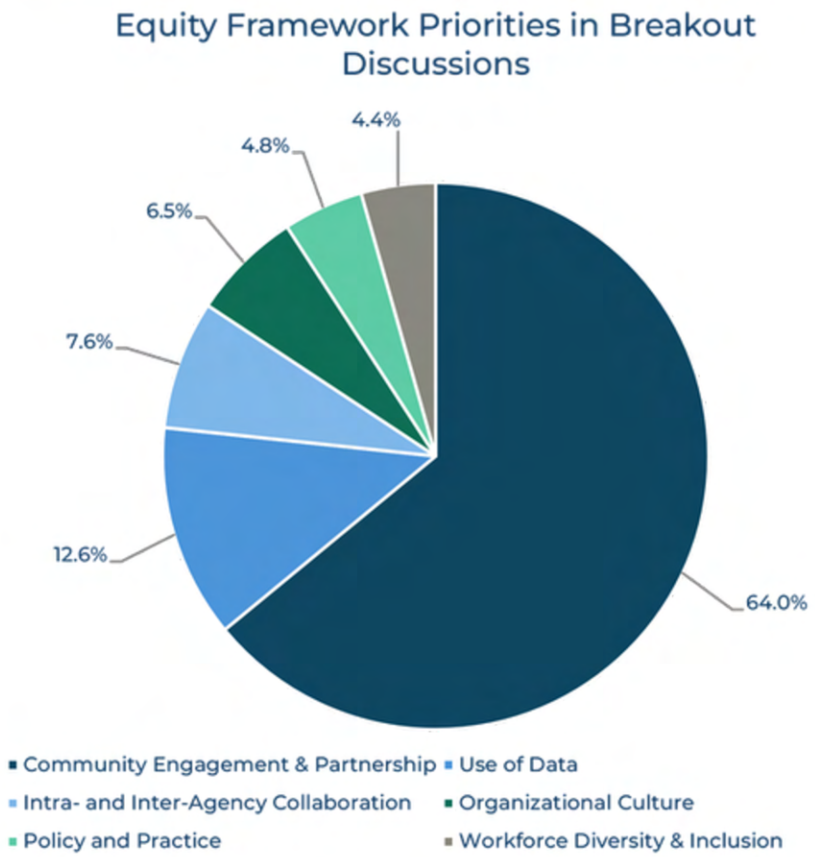


Figure 1. Percentage of instances when comments were categorized under each Equity Framework priority.

Our findings suggested that attendees wanted to see Community Engagement and Partnership considerations in the implementation of strategies across all of the Equity Framework priorities. For example, attendees often encouraged prioritization of data use specifically to create a sense of trust and accountability with communities.

EQUITY SUMMIT DISCUSSION THEMES

Attendee comments were reviewed and categorized into the ten major discussion themes that were identified on the day of the Summit. The table and figure below contain a breakdown of the number of comments that spoke to each theme and the percentage of all comments that each theme represented.

Note: Comments frequently aligned with multiple Summit discussion themes and were counted under each applicable theme, resulting in a higher number of comments categorized to all themes than the number of comments collected. This method of analysis allows us to see how relevant each theme was to discussions.

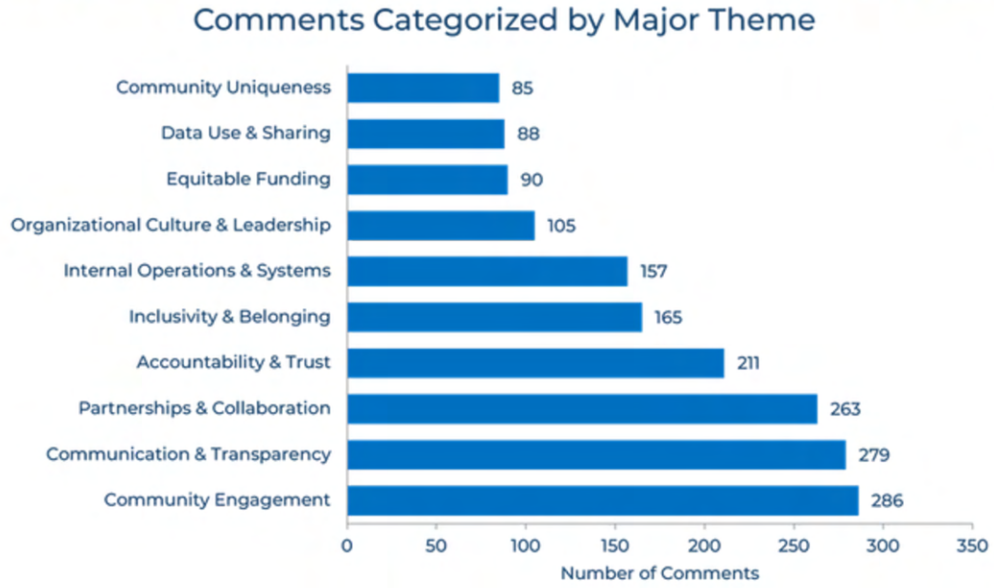


Figure 2. The number of comments categorized to each discussion theme.

Findings showed that Community Engagement was the most frequently mentioned theme, followed by Communication and Transparency and Partnerships and Collaboration. These data highlighted the importance that attendees placed on continuous and meaningful engagement with communities, transparent dialogue regarding initiative implementation, and formal organizational relationships with communities aimed at developing more comprehensive solutions to infrastructure inequities. Rather than indicate specific infrastructure priorities, these findings reflect how important these themes were to the feedback that was collected. Our analysis suggests that the most frequently raised themes should be most strongly considered when planning for how an equitable infrastructure initiative is implemented. Many comments advocated for changing “how” Public Works delivers services, not only “what” or “where.”

CHALLENGES

This section highlights implementation challenges that were identified during the Summit. Attendees and Public Works staff across every discussion table identified several challenges that they could address together in order to ensure that Public Works' infrastructure and services support more equitable outcomes for each community. Some examples of those challenges are:

The Scale and Complexity of County Government:
Attendees expressed that it can be challenging to understand how the County operates, what each department does, and how the County plans to meet the unique needs of communities spread out across such a large and diverse geographic area.

Capacity Constraints in the County and in Community-Based Organizations:
County staff and CBO representatives highlighted challenges around having enough staff capacity to maintain basic operations while improving services to achieve more equitable outcomes.

Funding Challenges:
County staff, CBO representatives, and representatives from partner agencies voiced similar concerns regarding the limited funding that is available specifically to advance equity work.

Community Safety:
Attendees often highlighted the importance of creating safe environments for dialogue with community members, particularly for vulnerable communities.

Departmental and Jurisdictional Silos:
Community stakeholders voiced a need to understand the services and jurisdictions of the various agencies they receive services from. County staff and agency representatives expressed a need to work together and coordinate where their work overlaps.

DESIRED OUTCOMES AND OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Attendees shared comments that referred to specific outcomes, such as types of infrastructure, or opportunity areas that they wanted Public Works to prioritize. There were 140 comments that referred to outcomes and opportunity areas. Comments referred specifically to:

Climate resilience and urban cooling:
Attendees requested shade trees, solar panels at public facilities, and other infrastructure that builds resilience in communities that are especially vulnerable to extreme heat.

Green space and community gathering spaces:
Attendees asked Public Works to prioritize parks and other public gathering spaces where community members feel safe and feel a sense of belonging.

Protection from environmental hazards:
Attendees encouraged Public Works to track community vulnerabilities to environmental hazards, such as hazardous waste.

Based on the feedback provided, it is clear that sustainability and resiliency are key pillars in advancing more equitable infrastructure for Los Angeles County.

NEXT STEPS

The findings of this report will shape Public Works' Equity Framework implementation plan. The feedback provided by Summit attendees will provide the agency with an updated understanding of community priorities, and they will inform how Framework strategies are sequenced and prioritized. Public Works has committed to providing updates on Equity Framework implementation moving forward to ensure public stakeholders feel informed throughout the implementation process. Public Works plans to provide continuous updates through its Annual Equity Framework Progress Report.

Equity Framework Prioritization

Public Works is committed to ensuring that community priorities and needs continuously shape infrastructure, operations, services, community engagement efforts, and partnerships. Discussions at the Summit frequently highlighted that the way an agency engages communities, demonstrates accountability, and builds trust over time can enable long-term alignment in priorities between local government and communities. The major themes that were most frequently spoken about provided an initial view of the considerations that should be prioritized early to ensure communities are able to meaningfully engage with the Framework implementation process. The three themes that emerged most often during Summit discussions were:

- Community Engagement
- Communication and Transparency
- Partnerships and Collaboration

During initial implementation planning, Public Works will prioritize Framework strategies related to Community Engagement & Partnership that build the agency's capacity to understand community needs and take action to address them.

This process presents opportunities for community members to remain involved with the implementation process. For example, attendees often stressed the importance of empowering agency staff to attend community meetings so that they can talk face-to-face with residents and learn more about their needs. Public Works is currently prioritizing Equity Framework Strategy 1.3, which involves development of a community engagement dashboard that staff will use to compile and share information about events and community engagement opportunities.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will be encouraged to seek out and create opportunities for community dialogue, particularly with communities that may be impacted by their work. Continuous check-ins with CBOs and residents across the County will be needed to ensure that all communities receive opportunities to voice their unique needs and have them met. Continuous collaboration will also be needed to ensure that upcoming events are added to the dashboard and that staff are equipped to identify community engagement opportunities when they arise.

Continuous engagement with CBOs and community members will be prioritized to ensure that the dashboards represent actual community needs (Strategy 2.5). This process will allow Public Works and communities to work together on defining and measuring progress on equity initiative implementation.

Public Works will additionally prioritize Framework Strategy 1.4 by working in close partnership with ARDI to shape the County-wide equitable community engagement guidelines that they are developing. Prioritization of this strategy will involve working with ARDI to tailor the guidelines to Public Works operations and services. This strategy will also involve working with different communities to understand their specific needs so that the community engagement guidelines equip staff to engage a wide range of communities. Strategy 1.4 presents opportunities for Public Works, CBOs, and residents to discuss and build a shared understanding of what equitable community engagement should look like. Public Works' partnership with ARDI also creates opportunities for best practices identified during community discussions to inform the County-wide community engagement guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

Public Works recognizes the importance of providing staff with the training necessary to carry out community engagement in ways that are equitable, culturally responsive, and that build mutual understanding with residents. Framework Strategy 6.4, which focuses on the expansion of staff equity trainings options, is currently being prioritized to ensure staff have more opportunities to build the skills needed for effective community engagement.

New equity trainings are being piloted and evaluated with Public Works staff focus groups that aim to help staff reflect on their implicit biases, teach staff how to make meetings and events more accessible, and provide staff with specific practices that enable them to build cultural competency with a wide range of communities. The training evaluation will involve assessing how useful the trainings are, thinking with staff about how these trainings can be applied to their day-to-day work, and considering what kinds of additional trainings might be needed to ensure staff feel confident about their community engagement skills.

This process presents opportunities for Public Works staff and communities to work together on identifying essential skills that staff should build in order to understand and address each community's unique needs.

Annual Equity Framework Progress Report

Public Works will publish its first Annual Equity Framework Progress Report in January 2027 to provide an update on its Framework implementation plan and the progress it has made. The Progress Report will highlight how feedback collected at the Summit shaped Public Works' approach to implementation. We will release the Progress Report on an annual basis to demonstrate accountability to community feedback and ensure that stakeholders are able to provide meaningful feedback on implementation over time.

TO LEARN MORE

Visit equity.pw.lacounty.gov

For questions related to the Equity in Infrastructure Initiative, contact Equity@pw.lacounty.gov