



Engage Anchorage

with the Better Public Meetings Project

Who We Are



Democracy
Innovation



YWCA
alaska



FEDERATION OF
COMMUNITY COUNCILS
ANCHORAGE | EAGLE RIVER | GIRDWOOD

What is the Better Public Meetings Project?

About the Project

Anchorage is one of two cities nationwide selected to participate in the Democracy Innovations for Better Public Meetings project. In partnership with the National Civic League's Center for Democracy Innovation and the arts-based initiative Perfect City, this project aims to improve how public meetings are experienced by community members, elected officials, and municipal staff.

Thanks to funding from the AAA-ICDR Foundation, this work builds on national efforts to make public meetings more civil, effective, and connected to community values.

Why bother with Better Public Meetings?

Why It Matters

Bad public meetings damage public trust, discourage participation, and reduce the quality of local decision-making.

Better public meetings increase community satisfaction, improve transparency, and create space for more voices to be heard. By testing new tools, gathering community input, and exploring creative approaches, this project helps Anchorage reimagine how local democracy can work for everyone.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THE PROBLEM

The infographic is titled 'PUBLIC MEETINGS' and 'THE PROBLEM'. It features four colored boxes, each with an icon and text describing a problem:

- Yellow box:** Icon of a clock. Text: "Residents get three minutes to speak to their officials".
- Purple box:** Icon of three people with lightning bolts above them. Text: "These meetings reduce public trust in government and make it harder to make decisions".
- Blue box:** Icon of people sitting around a table. Text: "They reduce public trust in government and make it harder to make decisions".
- Red box:** Icon of a scale of justice. Text: "They increase inequities: People most affected by decisions aren't there".

Democracy Innovations for Better Public Meetings project

Process and timeline



CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE SCAN

- Interview community organizations and government staff.
- Launch a scorecard to rate public meetings.



COLLABORATE

Share the findings with the community and hold a visioning exercise.



DISCUSS IDEAS

Work with civic engagement practitioners, city managers, staff and elected officials to discuss prospects for better public meetings.



INTEGRATE INNOVATIONS

Continue monitoring approaches and tools that uniquely address the community's needs.



Civic Infrastructure Scan

A highly publicized survey will ask the community what they need. Additionally, we'll conduct interviews with community members, leaders, and organizers to understand what's working—and what's not—when it comes to participation in public meetings. This information will help identify opportunities to build more inclusive processes.

Civic Engagement Scorecard

A simple digital tool will let the public share feedback about their experience at Assembly and community council meetings. Scorecards are anonymous and will help shape future improvements.

Participatory Performances

Two powerful events will be produced in collaboration with Perfect City, where attendees will hear real words from real Anchorage meetings brought to life on stage. Through performance and dialogue, we'll explore how we show up, listen, and lead together.

Pilot New Tools & Strategies

Based on community feedback, the National Civic League will recommend specific improvements to test out—from new meeting formats to digital engagement tools. Residents and the Assembly will evaluate and guide these changes throughout 2026.



Why Anchorage?

01

Long history of civic engagement

02

Community Partnerships

03

Community Council system

04

Young city open to experimentation

Why is civic engagement important to you?

Our Partners

League of Women Voters

Anchorage Youth Vote

Anchorage Housing Club

NeighborWorks Alaska

Alaska Voter Hub

Alaska Common Ground

Native Samoan Corporation

Choose Anchorage

Teaching Better Artists

AND MORE!

The Ask - Assembly

Identify at least two (2) **Assembly champions** to participate on a cross-sector team that will collaborate with the National Civic League on this project.

Actively support the deployment and utilization of a **Civic Engagement Scorecard** at meetings of the Anchorage Assembly.

Give **consideration to the recommendations and innovations** that emerge from the public through the project.

Engage collaboratively throughout the proposed 12-month project schedule as individual member schedules permit: participating in research, attending meetings with the public, piloting new meeting strategies, and considering implementation of final recommendations to foster more representative and effective public engagement within the Municipality of Anchorage.

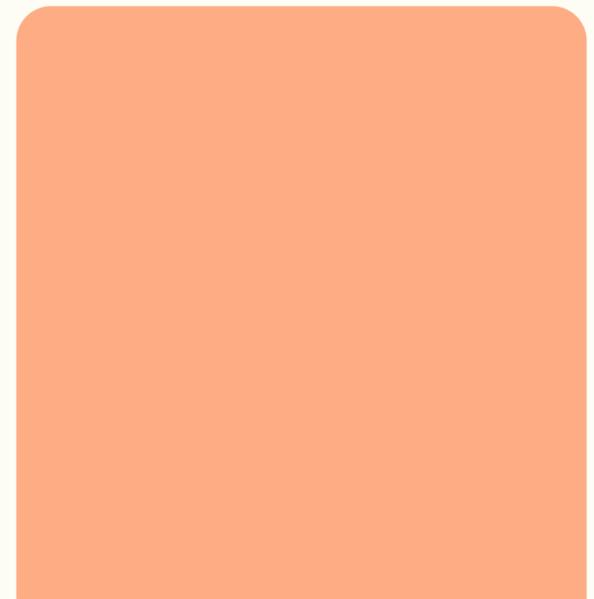
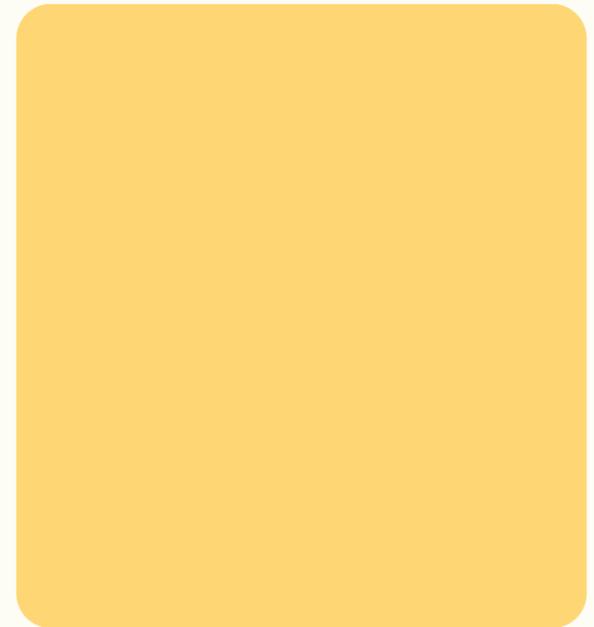
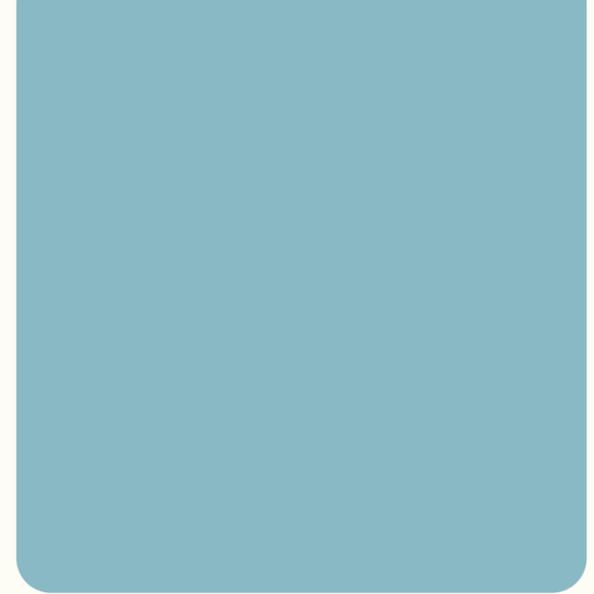
The Ask - Community Councils

Share Better Public Meetings **events and updates** with your membership

Actively support the deployment and utilization of a **Civic Engagement Scorecard** at your community council meeting.

Participate by sharing your thoughts and experiences, which will be part of the creation of **recommendations and innovations**.

Engage collaboratively throughout the proposed 12-month project schedule as schedules permit: participating in research, attending meetings, and piloting new meeting strategies.



Civic Scorecards

How They Function

- Attendees invited to share feedback at any community council meeting they attend.
- Same link for everyone, they can select the council from a dropdown.

Length of Scorecard

- Scorecard will last 4 months.
- Data will be used for the reports from the National Civic League. Also, the information will be summarized and provided to Council officers.
- Opportunity to continue the scorecard afterwards and continue to collect data.

Getting Participation

- Share link on meeting agendas, in Zoom chats, and post QR codes at in-person sign in tables.
- Remind members at the end of meetings.
- FCC Staff will be supporting education and communications around Better Public Meetings.



TIMELINE

Research & Initial Engagement

Sep
2025

Project Kick Off

- Begin research for the Civic Infrastructure Scan.
- Launch a community-wide survey.
- The Anchorage Assembly and community councils start using the Civic Engagement Scorecard during meetings.

Oct
2025

Onsite Engagement

- Continue the Civic Infrastructure Scan research.
- Hold the first in-person public meeting to share the project.
- Train facilitators to map community assets and challenges.

Participatory performance that allows residents, officials, and staff to think through how public meetings currently function

Nov
2025

Research & Planning

- Continue the Civic Infrastructure Scan research.

Dec
2025

Virtual Review

- Conclude the Civic Infrastructure Scan research.
- Host a virtual public meeting to release and discuss the findings from the Scan and Scorecard data.
- Continue the community mapping process.

Strategy Piloting & Recommendations

Apr
2026

Second Onsite Engagement

- Hold the second in-person public meeting.
- This meeting will feature a report on the strategy pilots, a discussion of Scorecard results, and the release of full recommendations.

Participatory performance that helps young people, adults, officials, and staff explore recommendations for improving public meetings and public engagement generally

Mar
2026

Monitoring & Preparation

- Continue conversations and developing recommendations.

Feb
2026

Piloting Strategies

- Begin piloting the selected strategies and tools.
- Hold conversations with leaders identified on the community network map to engage more residents.

Jan
2025

Developing Recommendations

- Develop initial recommendations for strategies and tools to pilot, focusing on one in-person process and one digital or hybrid approach.

Implementation & Refinement

May
2026

Implementation Strategy

- Discuss the recommendations and plan for implementation.
- Hold a discussion centered on the network map.
- Organize a virtual public meeting on outreach strategies and the role of youth as engagement leaders.

Jun
2026

Implementation

- Begin implementing the approved recommendations.

July
2026

Progress Review

- Continue with the implementation of recommendations.
- Discuss the progress of implementation, incorporating results from the Scorecard.

Aug
2026

Final Summary

- Refine the strategies and tools that have been implemented.
- Host a final virtual public meeting to summarize the project's research, practices, recommendations, and future plans.

Final thoughts

Civic engagement is already a hot topic in Anchorage, and this project provides the technical assistance to support local leaders in moving from conversation to implementation.

With your support and participation, our community can make better public meetings – and more robust participation in local government – a citizen-led reality.