BUILDINGENERGY BOSTON

# Breaking the Design Bubble: Community Engagement and an Inclusive Process

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Heather Ferrell, Prism Design Lab

*Curated by Stephen Stuart*

Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) | March 21, 2025

# Breaking the Design Bubble:

## Community Engagement and an Inclusive Process

**As you settle, answer on stickies:**

**What are the <u>benefits</u> of community engagement?**

**What are <u>challenges</u> to implementing community engagement?**


NESEA Building Energy 2025

1 pm March 21st, 2025

Laura Cavin Bailey / Heather Ferrell

# Agenda

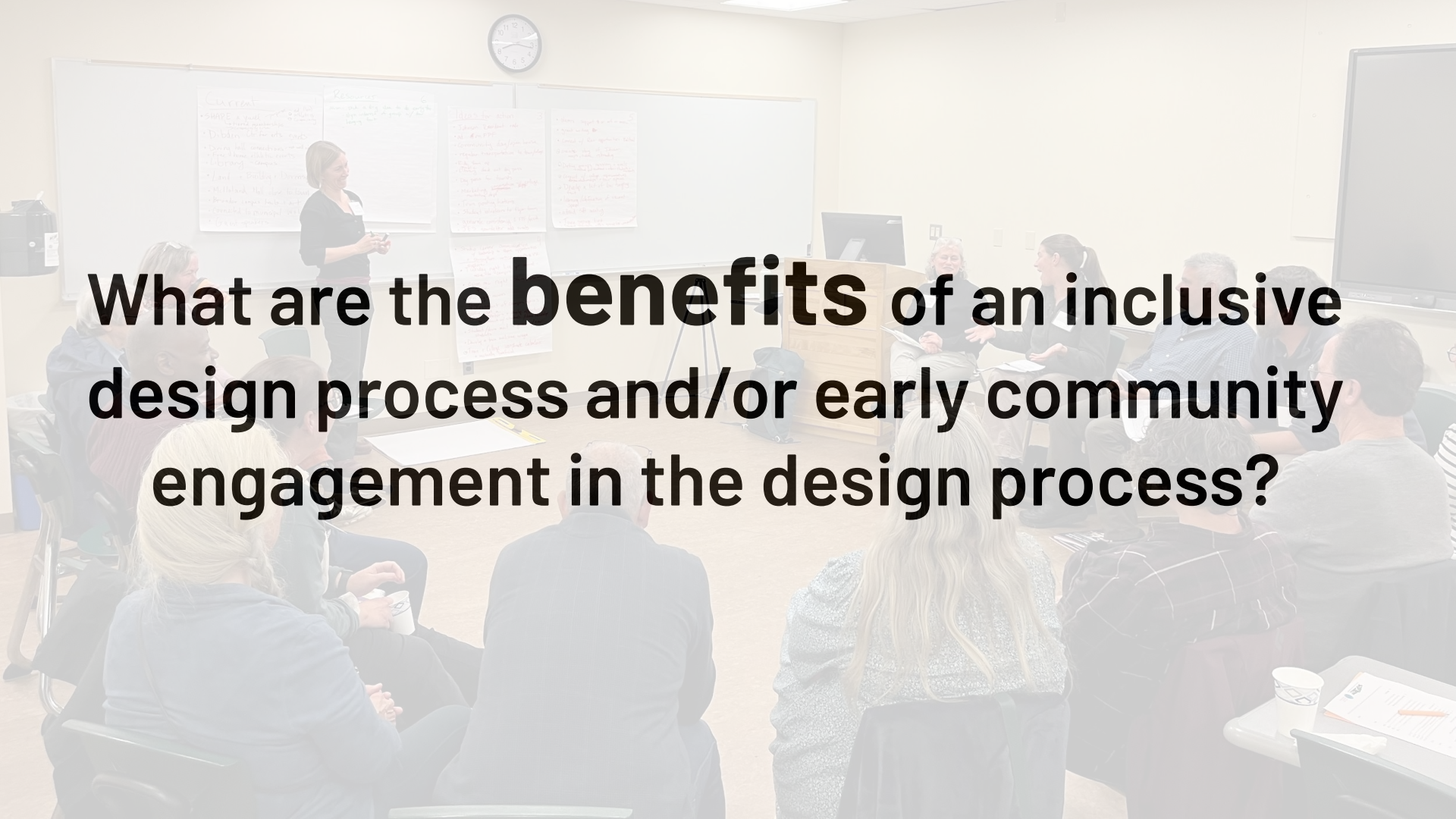
- Why do (or don't) we do community engagement and/or an inclusive design processes?
- What does community engagement look like in practice?
- What can you do to include community engagement and inclusive design?

# NESEA's Vision:

**2022 We envision a vibrant and resilient built environment that supports climate justice and equity.**

2017-2021 We envision a built environment in the Northeast that is climate neutral, adaptive and resilient, energy independent, architecturally inspiring, and supportive of connection and community.

# What are some **challenges** to implementing community engagement/inclusive design around your projects?

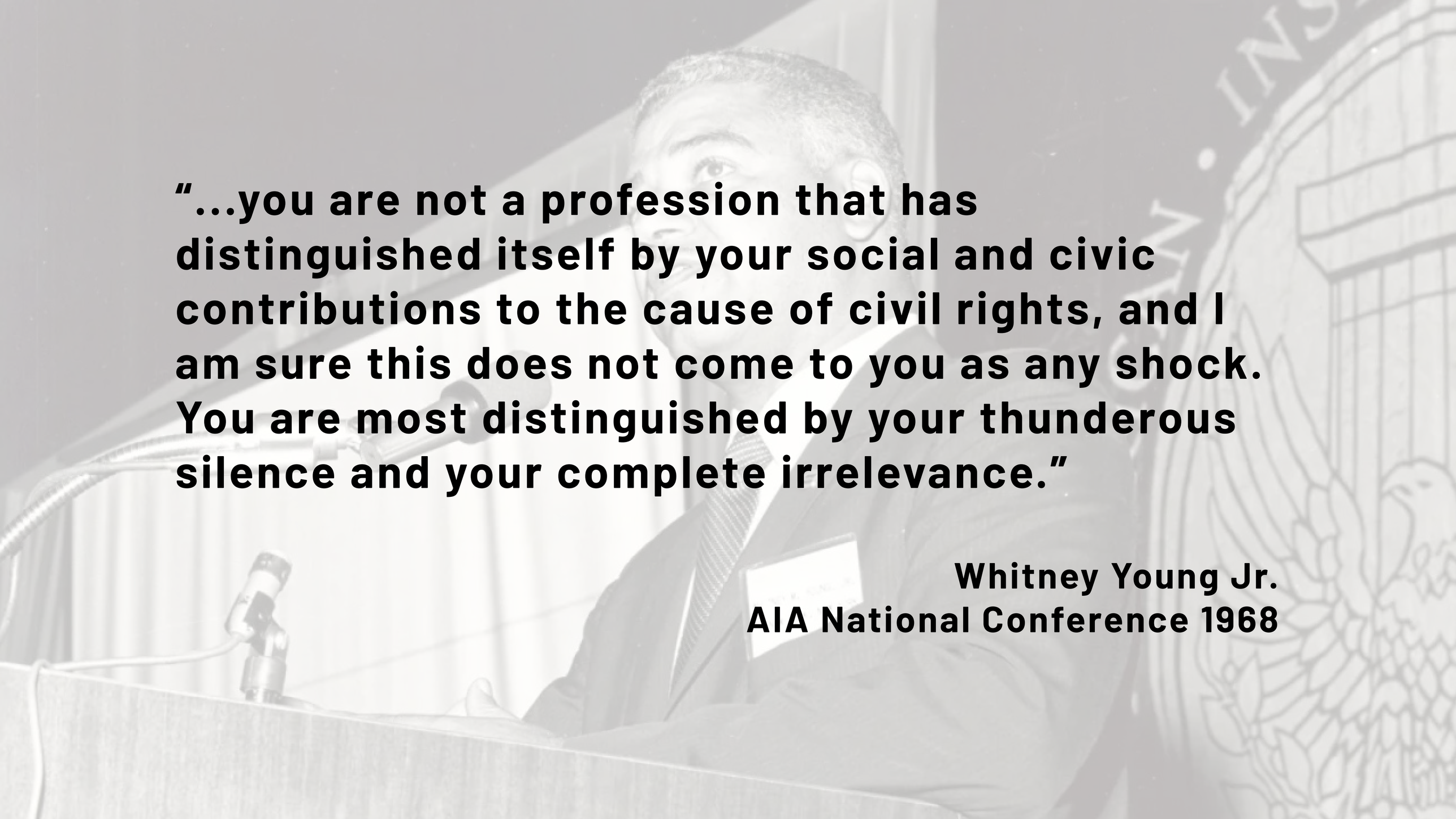


# What are the **benefits** of an inclusive design process and/or early community engagement in the design process?

# What is Public Interest Design?

**A human-centered and participatory design practice that emphasizes the “triple bottom line” of sustainable design—addressing social, economic, and environmental issues. It focuses on creating products, structures, and systems that serve the general good of local communities through collaborative efforts.**

*Butaro District Hospital, MASS Design Group*



**“...you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civic contributions to the cause of civil rights, and I am sure this does not come to you as any shock. You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance.”**

**Whitney Young Jr.**
**AIA National Conference 1968**

# *RURAL STUDIO*

SOCIAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

# Design for the Common Good

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**Institution**
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**Client**
All
Collaboration
Commissioned
Initiated by institution
Self-initiated
Voluntary

**Discipline**
All
Architectural Technology
Architecture
Art & Design
Building Science
Construction
Construction Management
Design

**Group size**
All
0-10
101+
11-50
51-100

**Budget**
All
Client-funded
Self-funded
Sponsorship

**Organisation**
All
Curricular
Extra-curricular
Foundation
Graduates
Phd
Postgraduate
Research-initiated

**Timescale**
All
Days
Months
Years

**Product**
All
Analytical
Permanent
Propositional
Semi-permanent
Temporary

Sugar Roots Farm

Prisoners Apothecarts

Grow Dat Youth Farm

Waste Wall 1, 2 + 3

New Day School Classrooms

Trefusis Bird Hide

Langa Theatre Rebuild

The Growing Space

Public Space Transformation

Neuman Forest Pavilions

Sensory Bench

CrushUp

# Design for the Common Good

## A NETWORK OF NETWORKS

SOCIAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN NETWORK

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ABOUT | PROJECT MAP | CASE STUDIES | TOOLS | PROJECT CERTIFICATION | NEWS | CERTIFIED FIRMS | CONTACT

SEED Network > Tools

# Tools

## Methodology

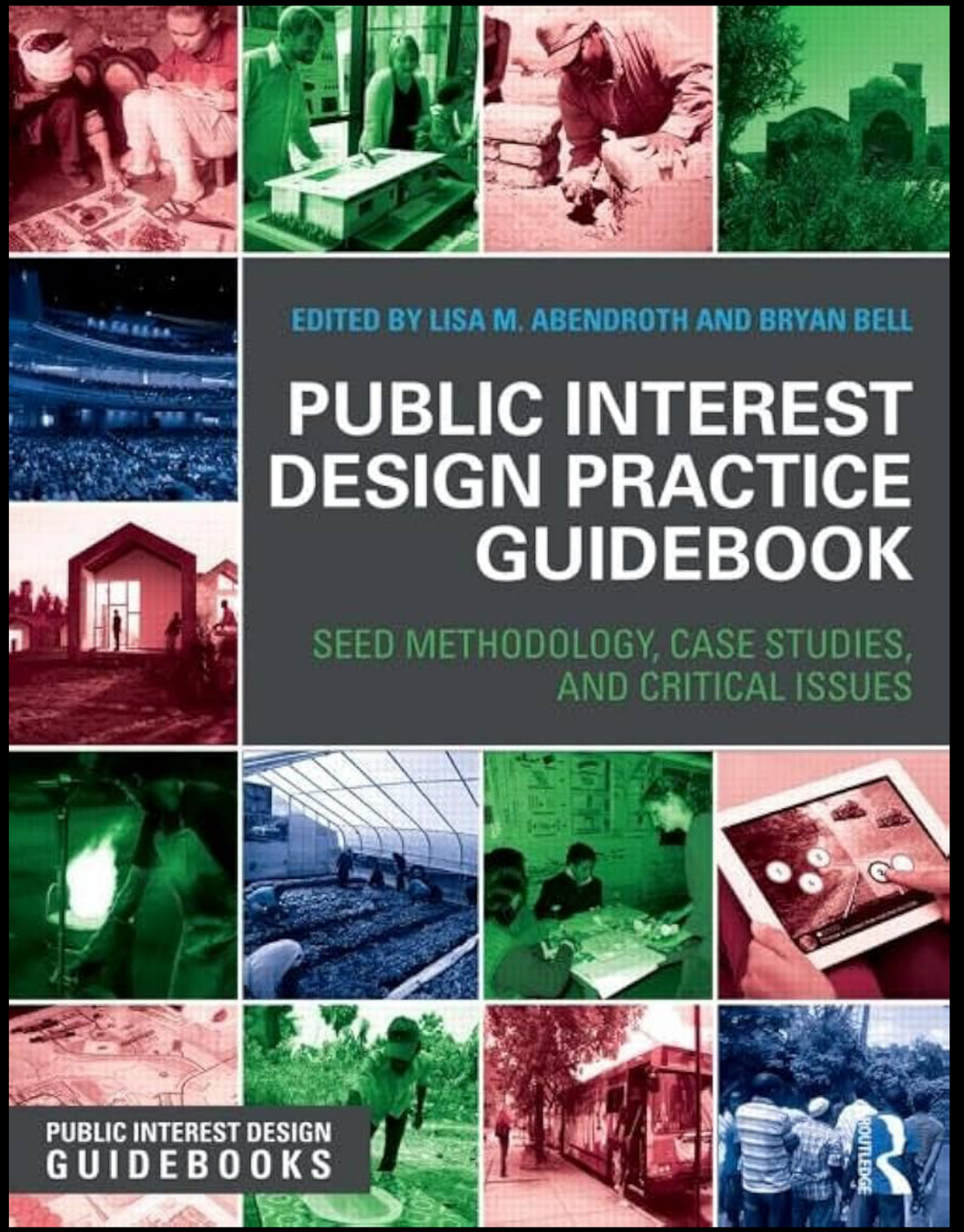
SEED Principles and Process. Read more.

## Engagement Methods

Determining appropriate ways to engage stakeholders and community participants can help ensure agency during a project. Through the potential of participatory action, communities are empowered to join in democratic decision making to establish their priorities, define their goals, and build consensus.The designer or design team can function as a facilitator to engage participation. This role requires neutrality—respect for an unbiased and objective process that honors the social and cultural context of the community or audience. Read more.

## SEED Consulting

The "Certified SEED Consulting Firms" have been selected for their exemplary ability to work with clients and communities through collaboration and participation to create the highest level of positive impact through their design.The selected firms have the capacity to understand the greater needs of clients and communities that often lie outside of the traditional scope of the architect. Read more.



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# Public Interest Design Principles:

- Principle 1: Advocate with those who have a limited voice in public life.

- Principle 2: Build structures for inclusion that engage stakeholders and allow communities to make decisions.

- Principle 3: Promote social equality through discourse that reflects a range of values and social identities.

SOCIAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

# Public Interest Design Principles (cont'd):

- Principle 4: Generate ideas that grow from place and build local capacity.

- Principle 5: Design to help conserve resources and minimize waste.

## PART 1: PROJECT APPLICATION

This section of the SEED Evaluator requests basic information about the project type, participants, issues addressed and methodology. Part 1 is intended to provide an introduction to the project and therefore information should be brief yet descriptive of the qualities most relevant to the nature of the work and those involved.

## PART 2: PROJECT DETAILS

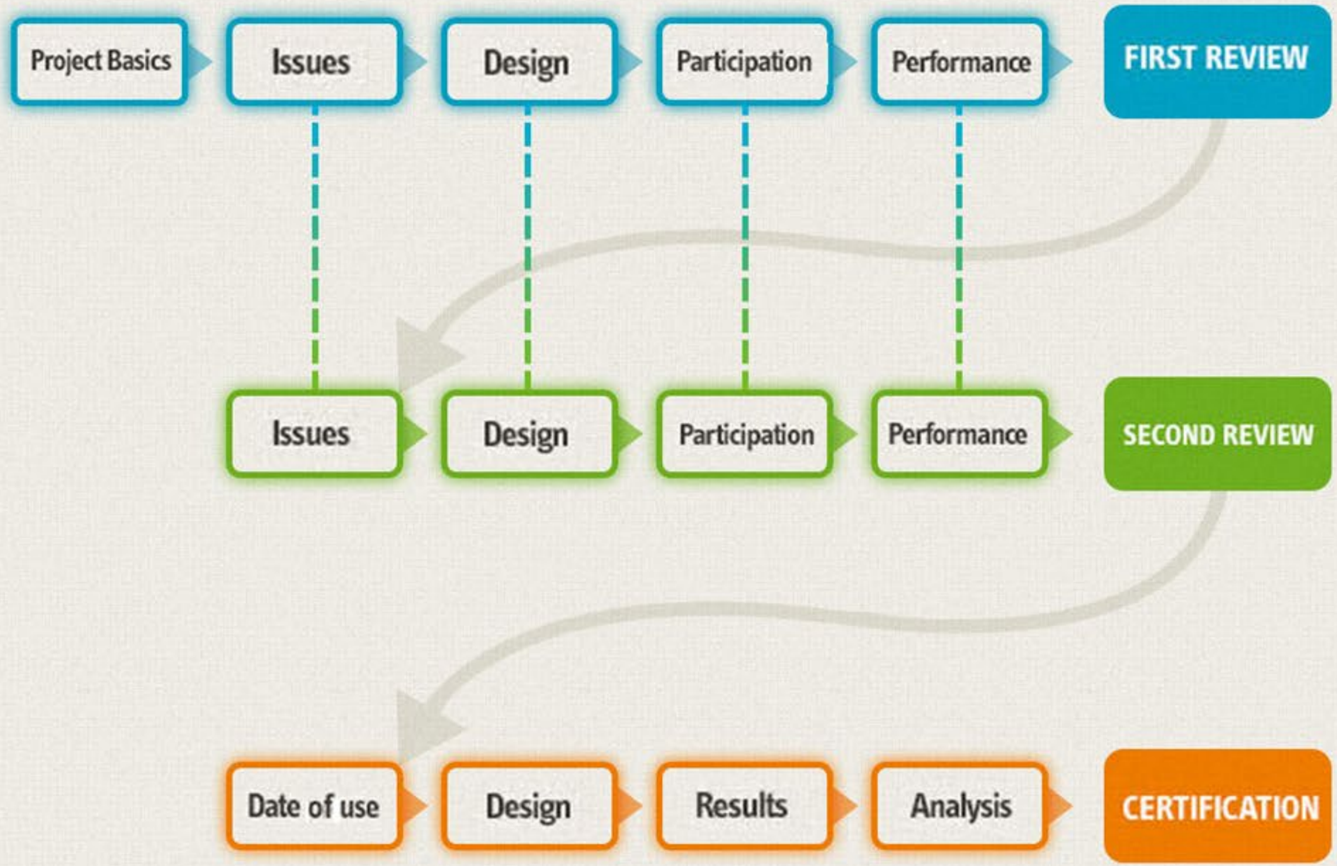
Part 2 builds upon the content submitted in Part 1 by providing the opportunity to elaborate on and/or modify that information. This section allows reviewers to understand the project in terms of background research, design process, extent of stakeholder participation, as well as progress made towards stakeholder goals in more depth.

## PART 3: PROJECT RESULTS

This final section requests an analysis of the project results including an assessment of performance measures and met goals. Reflection on knowledge gained during the scope of project and what could have been done differently punctuates the conclusion of the SEED Evaluator.

# SEED® EVALUATOR

VERSION 3.0

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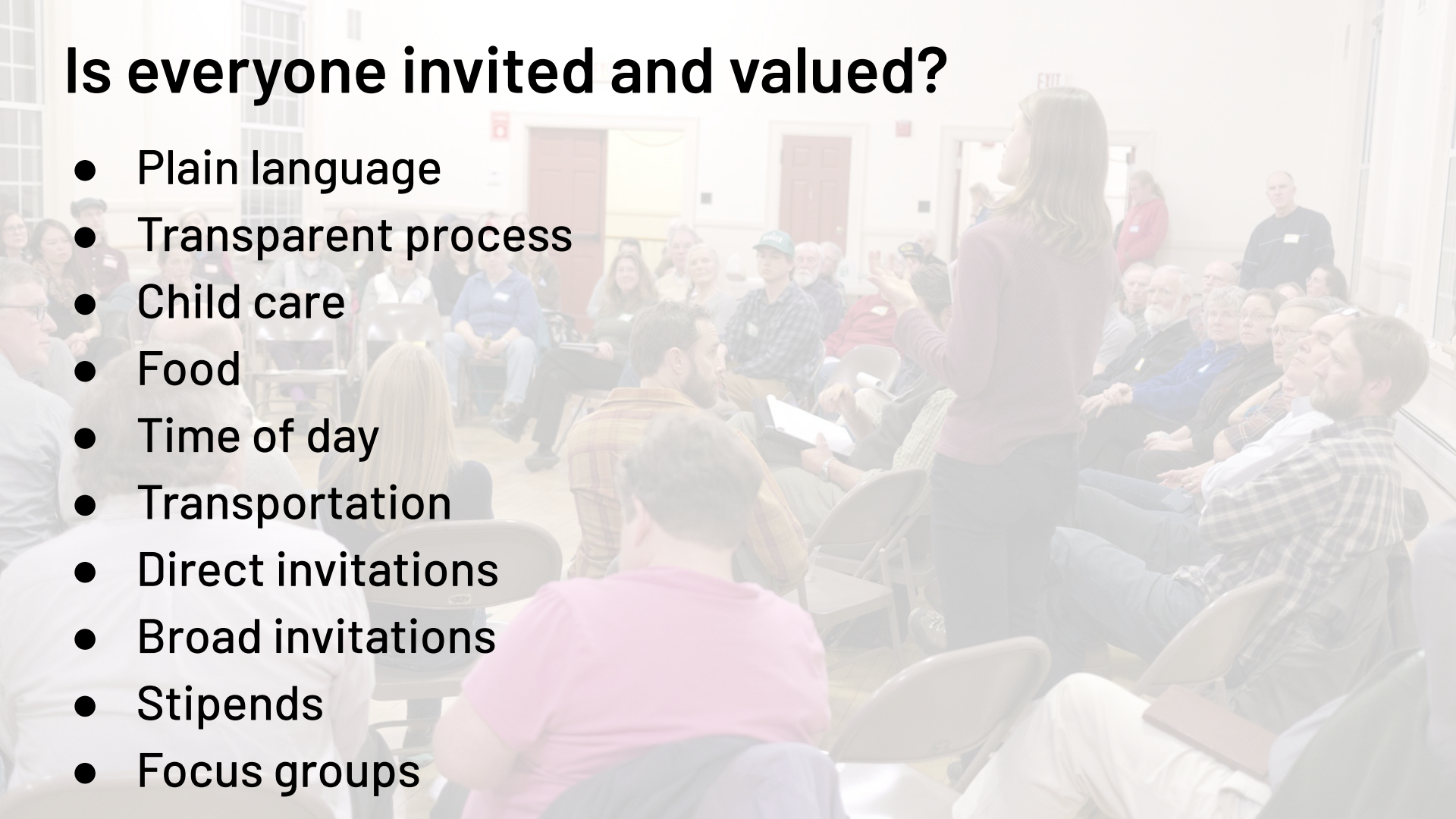
# What does community engagement look like?

Vermont Council on Rural Development

Unleashing the power of Vermonters to create a better future

# Is everyone invited and valued?

- Plain language
- Transparent process
- Child care
- Food
- Time of day
- Transportation
- Direct invitations
- Broad invitations
- Stipends
- Focus groups



**Inform** – provide balanced information to help the public understand

**Consult** – solicit public comment on an issue or decision

**Involve** – work directly with the public throughout the effort, to ensure their ideas are understood and respected

**Collaborate** – partner with the community in developing alternatives and choosing actions

**Empower** – the final decision is up to the community and the community owns the project or initiative

source: Community Leadership in Action - Vermont Council on Rural Development, available at https://www.vtrural.org/guide/

# Inform ➡ Consult ➡ Involve

The Putney Dorms, Putney VT

Maclay Architects

# Inform ➡ Consult ➡ Involve

The Putney Dorms, Putney VT

Maclay Architects

# What actions can you take to implement an inclusive design process and/or community engagement?

# Thank you!

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