



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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4

CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: South Shore Library

Date: November 24, 2024

Steering Committee Co-Facilitator:
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Language:

English



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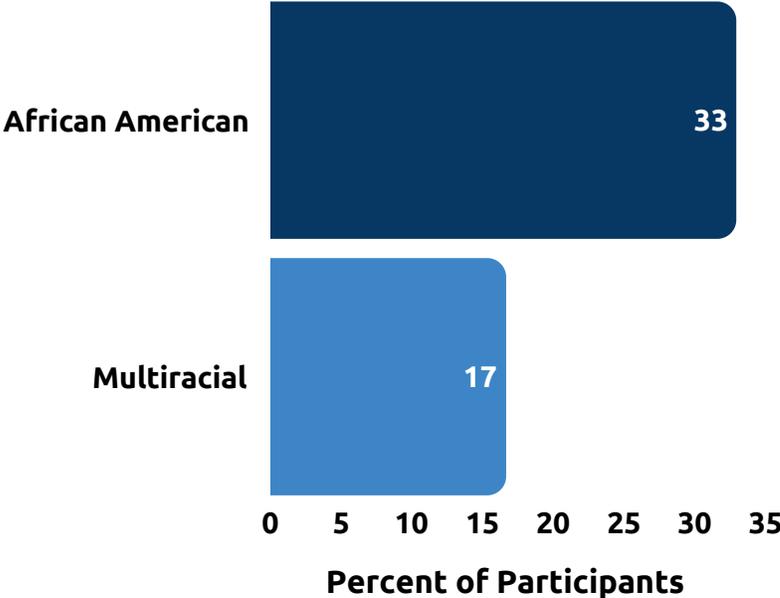
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Demographics

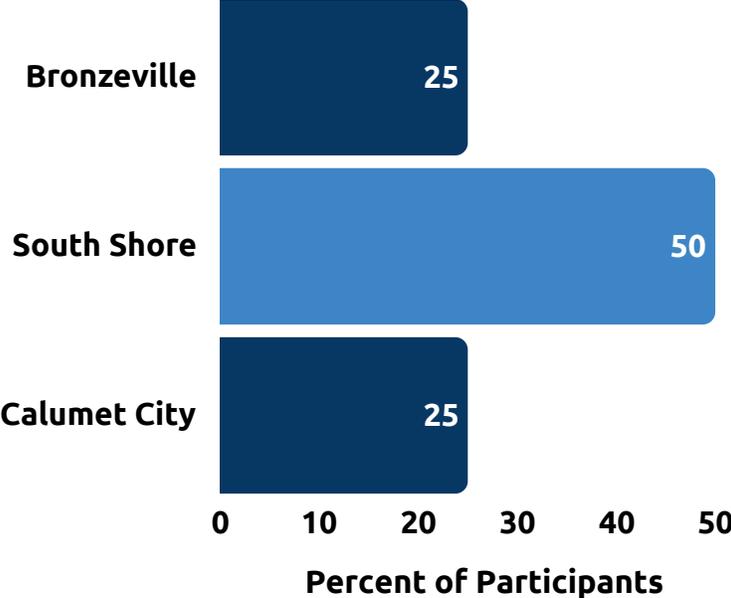
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 4

Race/Ethnicity



Neighborhoods

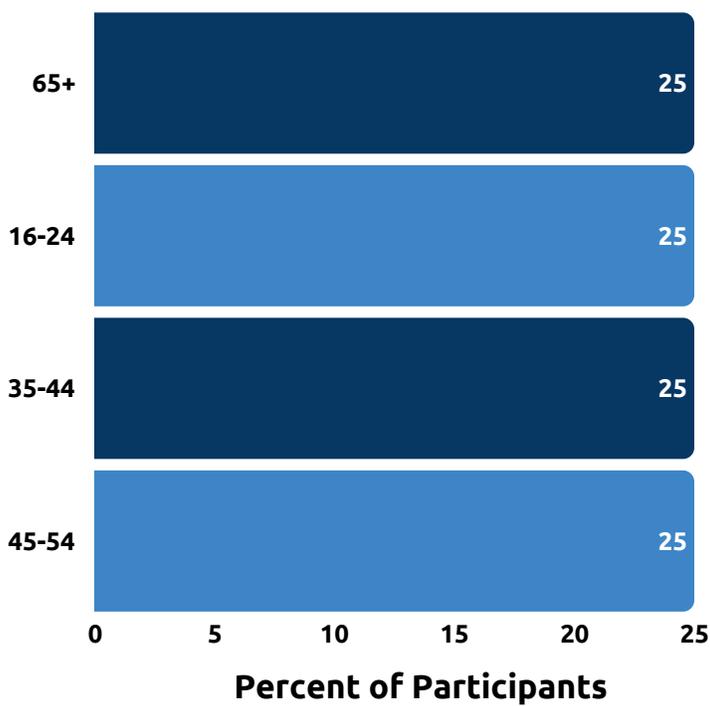


Demographics

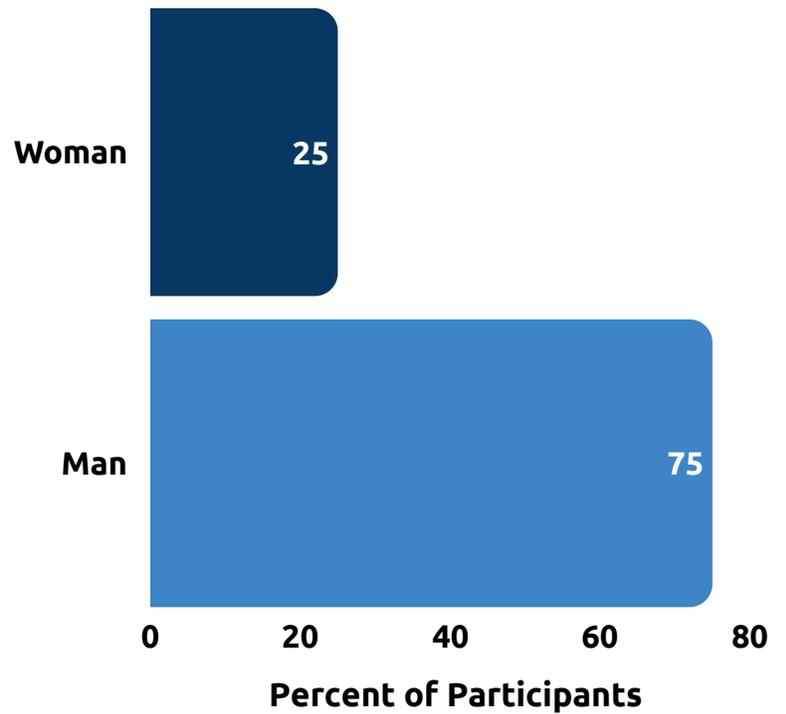
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 6

Age



Gender Identity

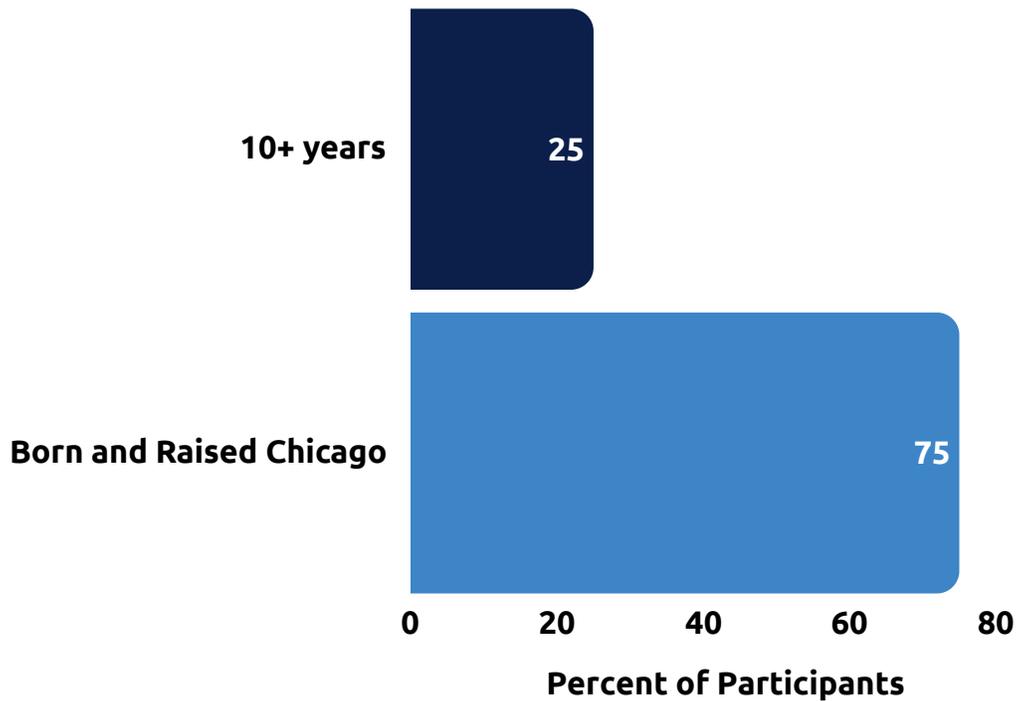


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 6

How long have you lived in Chicago?



Overview

The Office of Equity & Racial Justice (OERJ), Chicago United for Equity (CUE), and Chicago's Co-governance Steering Committee guided community members through a conversation to create a shared definition of co-governance that prioritizes equitable partnerships and decision-making between government and community.

Objectives

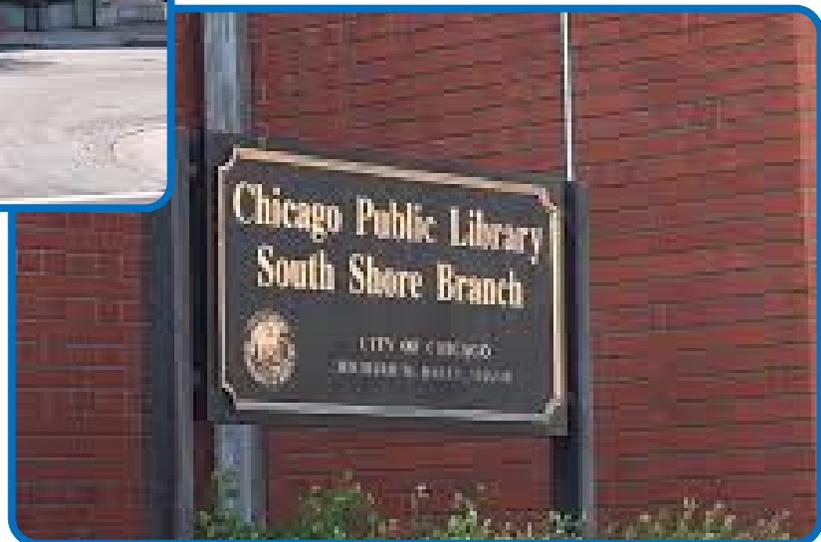
- Provide insights on current experiences with city government—highlighting both successes and challenges.
- Imagine what co-governance could look like in practice, focusing on equity, transparency, and inclusivity.

Key Takeaways

- Co-governance should prioritize authentic power-sharing, with communities actively involved in decision-making, not just heard.
- The city government's lack of coordination and responsiveness needs to be improved with effective communication and follow-through on issues raised.
- Equity and inclusion must be central to co-governance processes to ensure all communities, especially marginalized ones, are actively engaged in decision-making.

Conversation Highlights

- "Co-governance should mean addressing power imbalances and creating pathways for communities to not only voice their needs but actively participate in decision-making processes."
- "It's not enough to sit next to a decision-maker; we need to be decision-makers ourselves, with real accountability and transparency in the process."
- "The government says, 'We hear you,' but are they really listening? Co-governance needs to move beyond words and into actionable equity for the communities most impacted."



Understanding Your Experience



Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences engaging with the City of Chicago, rating experiences as "Difficult," "Neutral," "Excellent," or "No Government Engagement."

Engagement Activity Results

4

"Difficult" ratings: Reported challenges in navigating bureaucratic systems, feeling disrespected by officials, and struggling with transparency and accountability

2

"Neutral" ratings: Noted limited success when navigating city resources or learning processes through personal effort

2

"Excellent" ratings: Shared positive experiences with city services

0

"No Engagement" ratings: No participants responses

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- City departments are not coordinated l one department often doesn't know what another is doing.
- Government offices often make residents feel like they are a bother when seeking assistance, treating them dismissively rather than addressing their needs.
- Difficult: A woman administrator spoke down to me when managing family properties, which led to frustration and a defensive response: "Look woman, I'm not stupid. I take care of my grandmother's stuff."
- Difficult: "The parking ticket system and the parking fines are a "setup. I'm confused over the process."
- Difficult: As a young person living in my first apartment, I was intimidated by a cop questioning my right to own two cars and questioning a sticker transfer.
- Difficult: FEMA approved only \$1,500 of a \$15,000 claim for people impacted by flooding, but there was no clear way to follow up for the remaining amount, adding that even their alderman was unsure.
- Neutral: Being treated with dignity and respect is essential for taxpayers to engage with government. I feel neutral about government interactions when this respect is afforded.
- Neutral: I reached out to my alderman's office regarding an ordinance inquiry. The response was delayed, confusing, and lacked adequate answers. I had to decipher the information on my own.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Excellent: As a high school camp counselor for the city, I had a positive experience - I was satisfied with the work I was able to do.
- Excellent: The city staff was friendly and helpful when there was a possum in my garage. Additionally, a senior group provided a new furnace for their grandmother.
- Difficult: The systems were created for profit and now we need to change to prioritize community needs and connectedness.
- Difficult: Rework job descriptions within government to reflect more equitable processes, similar to the reforms in the 1960s.
- Difficult: Current policies address inequities in a performative way but lack real accountability. There needs to be more meaningful change.
- Difficult: Racial parity cannot be achieved through surface-level changes. We need wealth redistribution based on need and to reject the idea of pursuing racial parity.
- Difficult: Billionaires will not help regular people. The systemic power imbalances need to be addressed.
- Difficult: The 16% who control everything are unlikely to give up their power, even though the conversation on change is ongoing.
- Neutral: The City needs to provide more transparent, accessible information rather than one-sided communications, lack of resources, and inadequate support at local meetings like the Alderman's Ward Night.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



Facilitators shared three definitions of co-governance and asked participants to underline or verbally share phrases they would like to see reflected in Chicago's definition of co-governance.

Engagement Activity Results

Participants verbally shared or highlighted the following phrases from three definitions to build Chicago's definition of co-governance:

- People who are most harmed by structural racism and economic systems are part of creating the solutions.
- *Co-creating solutions should be changed to creating. To address the inherent power dynamic take out the co*
- The decision-making table, side by side with decision-makers
- In service of equitable outcomes that correct disparities among, racial, economic, gender, and other groups

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



Facilitators asked participants what they thought would be an effective pathway to co-governance:

- Co-governance should involve shared decision-making with communities actively engaged at every stage
- It is not enough to be at the decision-making table, side by side with decision-makers; there needs to be a measurable outcome attached.
- Intentionality
- Define what we mean by equity
- Funding organizers could change the balance of power
- Include questions on ballots by community
- Consciousness and connectedness to respect the person
- Provide information at city meetings and systems by sharing communication, resources, how processes work, etc.

