COMMUNITY MEETS GOVERNANCE

CO-GOVERNANCE DEFINITION & FRAMEWORK

Acknowledgment

OFFICE OF EQUITY
AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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CHICAGO UNITED FOR EQUITY

Purpose

Establish and promote innovative engagement models designed to reduce harm, address systemic inequities, and co-create solutions in collaboration with those most impacted by the issues. By developing Chicago's first Co-Governance Framework, the Office of Equity & Racial Justice, Chicago United for Equity, and Chicago's Co-governance Steering Committee hope to create a structure that fosters shared decision-making and collaborative governance between government and the community.

Outcomes

Near Term (Outputs)	Long Term (Outcomes)
Adopt a definition and framework of co-governance Build an enabling environment for co-governance models Model co-governance initiatives to address systemic inequities	Increase civic participation & engagement Repair civic trauma & build civic trust Encourage community power Foster authentic accountability Address systemic inequities

Chicago's Co-Governance Framework

Definition

Co-governance is an approach to governing where government and community residents share decision-making power by working side-by-side through formal and informal structures to design, plan, and implement policies and programs that achieve tangible outcomes. It addresses hyper-local community needs, structural racism, and systemic economic inequality.

Values

1. **Local community knowledge.** Prioritize action on the priorities that residents raise, recognizing that different community areas may require different solutions.

2. **Racial solidarity and justice.** Work to actively address structural racism in our city.

3. **Transparency.** Provide clear and open communication using jargon-free language that is accessible to people who speak languages other than English and to people of all ages and education levels.

Values

4. **Government accountability.** Publicly update communities about government action and frequent opportunities for residents to work side-by-side with government to make decisions and shape future action.

5. **Inclusion of historically excluded people.** Focus on centering the voices and experiences of residents who have been historically excluded from government processes, including people who are directly negatively impacted by systemic inequality, youth, and older adults.

6. **Sustainable, active engagement.** Outreach and communication should be ongoing activities at all stages of decision-making processes to ensure residents remain involved and aware of government action. Education about city government departments and processes strengthens our opportunities to collaborate. Collaborative governance should happen on a continuous basis and not solely at the beginning of a new or existing program/policy cycle.

7. **Follow-up and follow-through.** Focus on achieving tangible outcomes and communicating our results.

Equitable Pathways to Co-Governance

Theme	Pathway
Accessible and flexible engagement	• Engagement opportunities at flexible times (e.g. after 5 pm) and accessible locations (e.g. places where people already spend their time, like markets and community events)
Neighborhood-centered government presence	• Decision-making is happening in directly impacted neighborhoods, not just downtown • Government officials (e.g. representatives, Mayor) need to show up in each neighborhood • Alderpeople prioritize introducing themselves to their constituents.

Equitable Pathways to Co-Governance

Theme	Pathway
Clear and inclusive communication	• Clearly communicated opportunities for residents to engage local government and participate in co-governance activities • Clear communication of and facilitated connection to existing resources and support to meet local community needs • Engaging residents how they want to be engaged including, but not limited to: Newsletters, online updates, social media engagement, block-by-block engagement
Investment in local resources	• Invest in resources and programs in every neighborhood so that commuting is not a barrier • Use existing local infrastructure; for example, community centers could play a larger role in bridging communication gaps between residents and government

Equitable Pathways to Co-Governance

Theme	Pathway
Transparency and accountability	• Ensure processes and spaces in each neighborhood to facilitate responses to resident questions and concerns from an actual person, rather than an automated system • Participatory budgeting as a tool to inform government spending • Implement government accountability mechanisms: evaluation of government performance conducted by residents, public directories so that residents know who to contact for specific concerns, real-time tracking and reporting of government actions