Synopsis of: ***Engaging our Communities in Planning***
4:00 – 4:50 p.m. on Thursday January 21, 2016

OVERVIEW
The focus of this session was on how to best engage our communities in the planning process. The session included a presentation of important considerations and a group activity.

HIGHLIGHTS
The session was led with a presentation that drew participants' attention to these important framing questions regarding communication during the strategic planning process:

- How is this process perceived by our communities?
- Which stakeholders should be included?
- What do we hope to accomplish by engaging our communities?
- What methods of engagement might be most useful?

Interesting examples of communication around strategic planning from other institutions was included. Institutions often brand their strategic planning process with a name or term that better brings to life what they are trying to accomplish. This branding can increase stakeholder enthusiasm and participation in the process. The communication process that is used during the planning process can set the tone for later implementation of a plan. For example, innovative communication strategies during the planning process suggests innovative implementation of the plan. Participants then worked in small groups to strategize how to best communicate about the strategic plan to different stakeholder groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Participants appreciated the brief but comprehensive overview of what we should consider in communicating during the planning process. Creating different strategies for different stakeholder groups so that their interest is most effectively engaged is important. Additionally branding the planning process to engage interest and encourage input seems particularly promising, as well as incorporating a variety of traditional and innovative communication strategies with critical stakeholder groups.