2024

CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: AMPT HQ

Date: November 02, 2024

Steering Committee
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Language: English

OFFICE OF EQUITY AND RACIAL JUSTICE

CHICAGO UNITED FOR EQUITY

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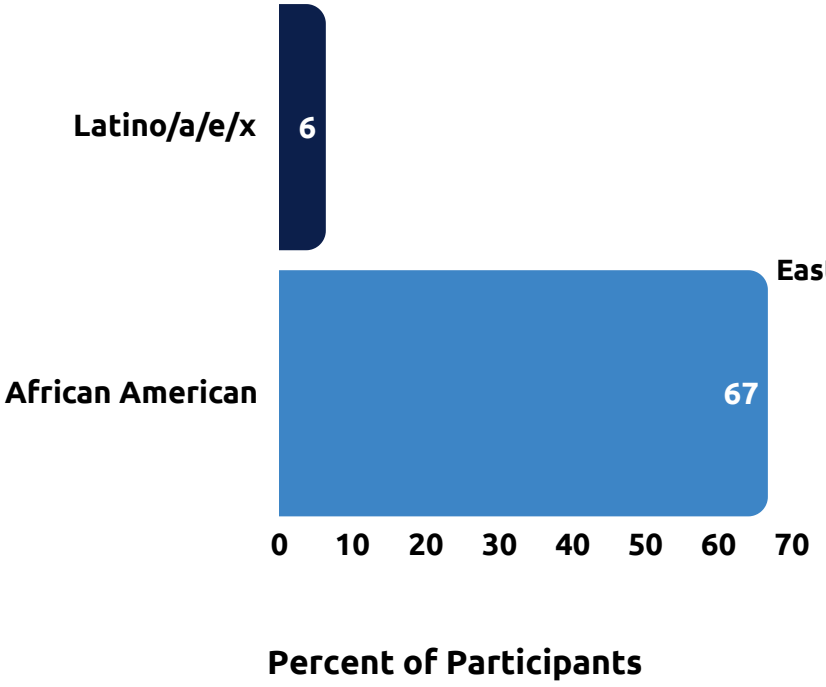
Demographics

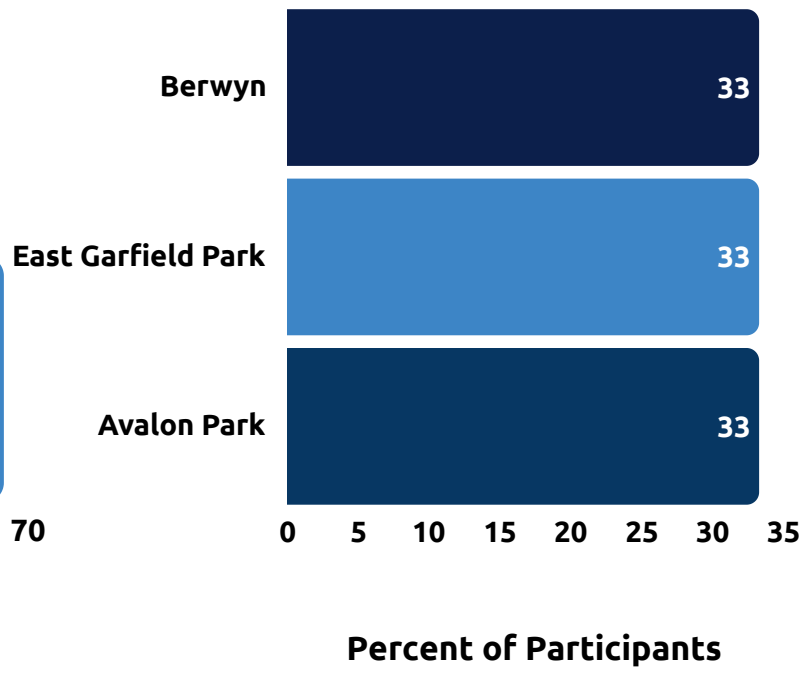
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 3

Race/Ethnicity



Neighborhoods

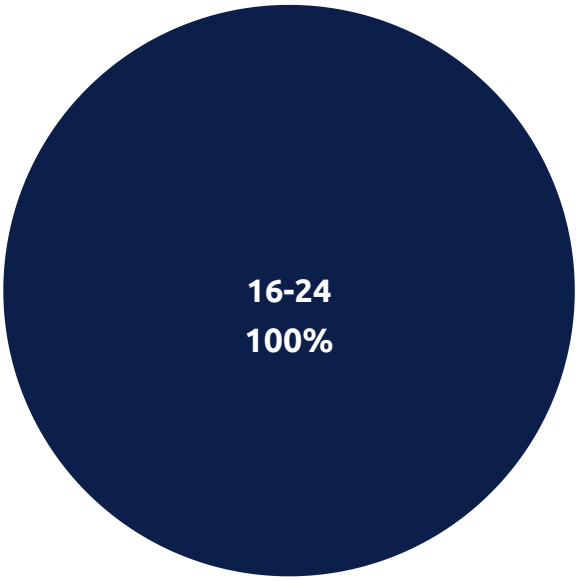


Demographics

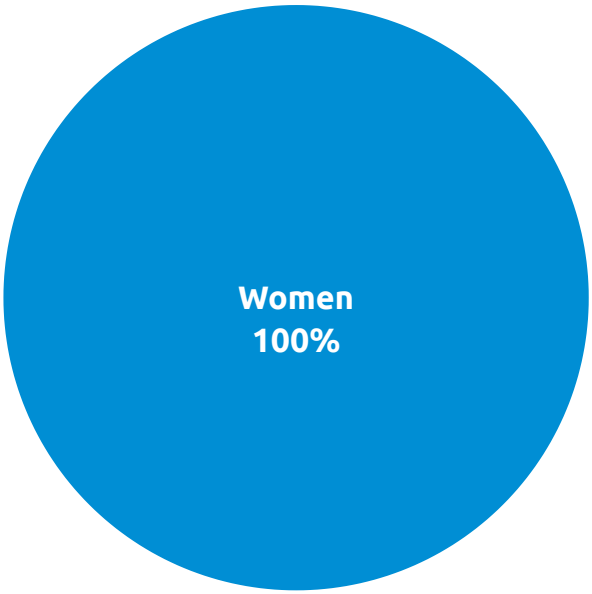
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 3

Age



Gender Identity

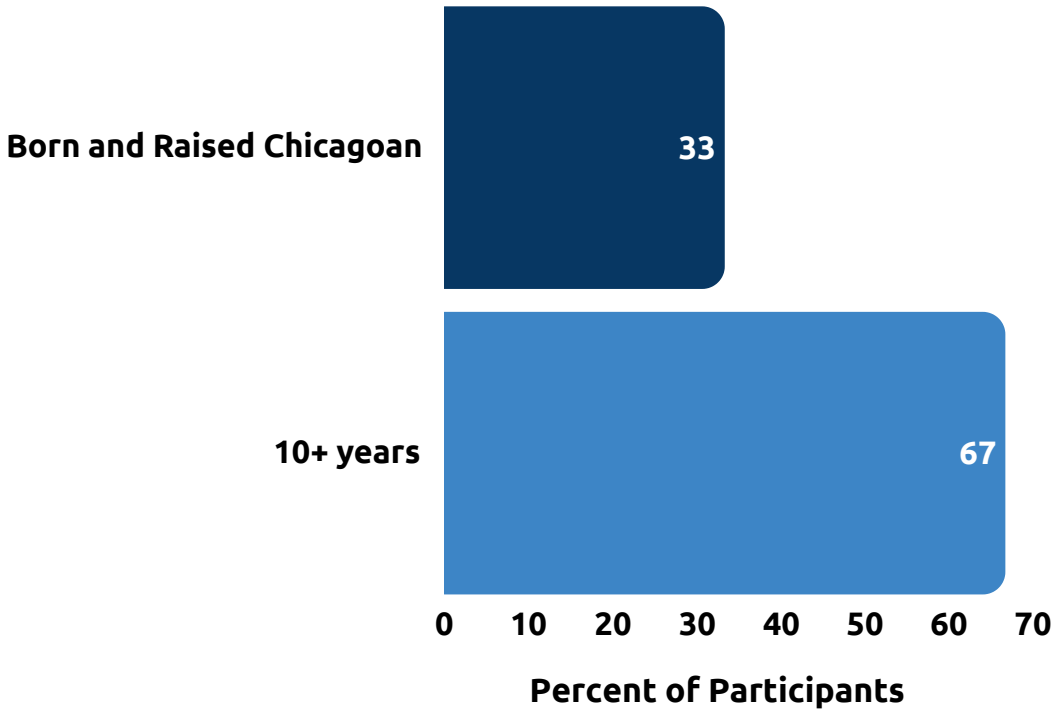


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants: 3

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

Create programs that allow young people to co-create solutions with government.

Government agencies should follow up with clear and actionable feedback to improve trust and collaboration.

Equitably distribute resources and events across all neighborhoods to ensure inclusive participation.

Conversation Highlights

- "Surveys don’t reflect what we feel; we need conversations with follow-up and actions tied to our input."

- "Government needs to make the process for engaging clear, accessible, and youth-friendly."

- "Co-governance is about more than listening. It’s about shared responsibility and ensuring that community voices result in real change."

"There’s nothing in schools to help us understand government or how to engage with it. It feels like we’re left out of the process entirely."

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."

3 **“Neutral” ratings:** Described partial success with communication, but noted room for improvement.

Reflections

Documentarians recorded the following reflections:

- Surveys are ineffective. They are lengthy and generic, often with no visible results or changes.
- There’s a lack of clear communication and follow-up after submitting complaints or suggestions to city departments.
- Current processes for government interaction are not youth-friendly and lack real-world application in schools.
- Create programs to better educate young people on how government functions and how they can effectively participate.

Participants also shared the following reflections in their participant handouts:

- **Difficult: "**The neighborhood I grew up in has a lot of stray cats. I called the department about the issue, and they said they’d handle it, but two weeks later, the cats were still there, and nothing had been done."
- **Difficult:** "CPS surveys focus on how teachers feel, but they don’t ask what students need or focus on improving schools. It feels like nothing changes."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

Participants also shared the following reflections in their participant handouts:

- **Difficult:** "When we take these surveys, they're so vague and don't let us express how we feel. It feels like a waste of 30 minutes because there's no follow-up or change."
- **Difficult:** "Teachers encourage us to leave good reviews on the surveys, even if we don't agree with the questions or our answers. It feels dishonest and like our voices aren't heard."
- **Difficult:** "There's no clear communication from CPS about what happens with surveys or actions afterward. It feels like nothing is being done."
- **Difficult:** "In after-school programs, there were inappropriate interactions with staff members. It left me questioning where they're finding these people."
- **Neutral:** "I placed my dot in neutral because CPS is hard to reach for specific issues. Unless it's a district-wide problem, they don't seem to care about individual schools."
- **Neutral:** "I've interacted with government websites, like the mayor's office, for job searches and housing resources. The information is there, but it's not clear or easy to navigate."
- **Neutral: "**CPS sends out surveys multiple times a year, but they only focus on general feelings of safety or whether students have an adult to talk to. It doesn't get to the real issues we face."
- **No Government Engagement:** "I haven't really engaged with the government because I don't know where to start. There's no guidance or communication about how to get involved."
- **No Government Engagement:** "There's nothing in schools to help us understand government or how to engage with it. It feels like we're left out of the process entirely."

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.

- Co-creating
- Community members are not only asked for their input but are at the decision-making table
- Outcomes that correct disparities
- Ensure accountability
- Government is actively working with communities to design and implement policies
- Structural racism
- Center people who are most harmed by structural racism
- Correct disparities among racial, economic, gender, and other groups
- Design and implement policies collaboratively
- Dignity and rights of community members are upheld
- Communities and government work together to make decisions and create programs
- Partnerships between government and community that create equitable solutions
- Building trust through transparency and follow-through
- A strategy where communities can be heard and seen in the right way
- Co-governance is a shared decision-making process that fosters equity and inclusion.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

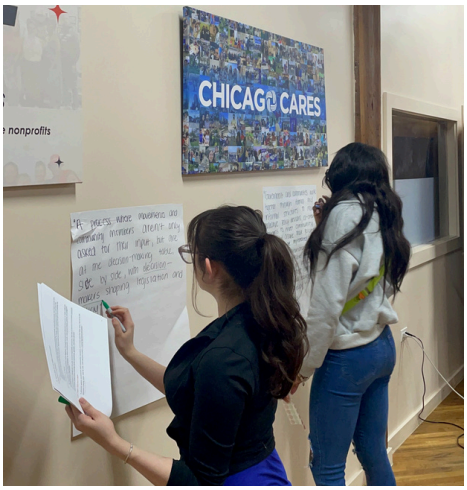
Facilitators shared three definitions of co-governance and asked participants to underline or verbally share phrases they would like to see reflected in Chicago's definition of co-governance.

- Co-governance must involve genuine collaboration, with marginalized voices prioritized in decision-making.
- Using accessible language in defining co-governance is important to ensure broader understanding.
- Students agreed that overly complex or "jargony" language should be simplified so it is easier to understand.
- Events should be created where students have opportunities to speak with higher-ups. Additionally, events need to be promoted on social media to reach a broader audience. Social media engagement, such as live sessions, can make conversations more accessible and personable. Some students may feel nervous attending in-person events, so offering alternative ways to engage would be beneficial.
- Resources and events should be open to all neighborhoods throughout the year. Currently, the same neighborhoods host the same events, which limits access. For young adults, commuting is difficult, but there is still a desire to learn and improve. Every neighborhood should have open resources for youth development.
- In schools, students often have no one to talk to besides teachers, who either cannot help or do not try. There is a need for more resources, programs, and people committed to enacting real change.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?

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

Documentarians summarized the following group reflections:



- Hosting events in public places would make participation easier for young adults who cannot commute long distances. Holding events inside schools can also increase access and reach more students.
- Youth need conversations where they are given a voice, not just talked at. Students do not want to attend events where they are lectured without the opportunity to provide input—especially after school. The key question is: Will we have a voice in the conversation or not?
- Student-led events are critical. Students should come together to determine how they want to structure their ideas, what points they want to discuss, and how to present their perspectives.
- Student-led discussions allow for free and open dialogue. Students can develop professionalism over time and shape their plans and ideas into a more formal structure when ready