



COMMUNITY
MEETS
GOVERNANCE

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CO-GOVERNANCE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Location: Pullman Library

Date: October 29, 2024

Steering Committee

Co-Facilitator: Mike Strobe,
The Kola Nut Collaborative

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Language: English



Table of Contents

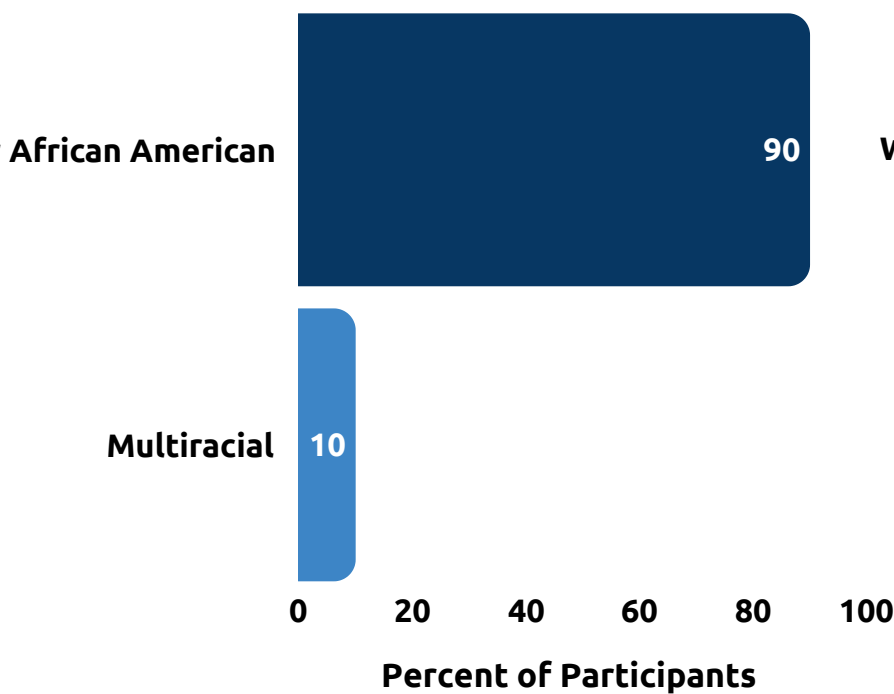
Demographics	—————	01
Objective and Key Takeaways	—————	05
Conversation Highlights	—————	06
Understanding Your Experience	—————	07
How Do You Define Co-Governance?	—————	09

Demographics

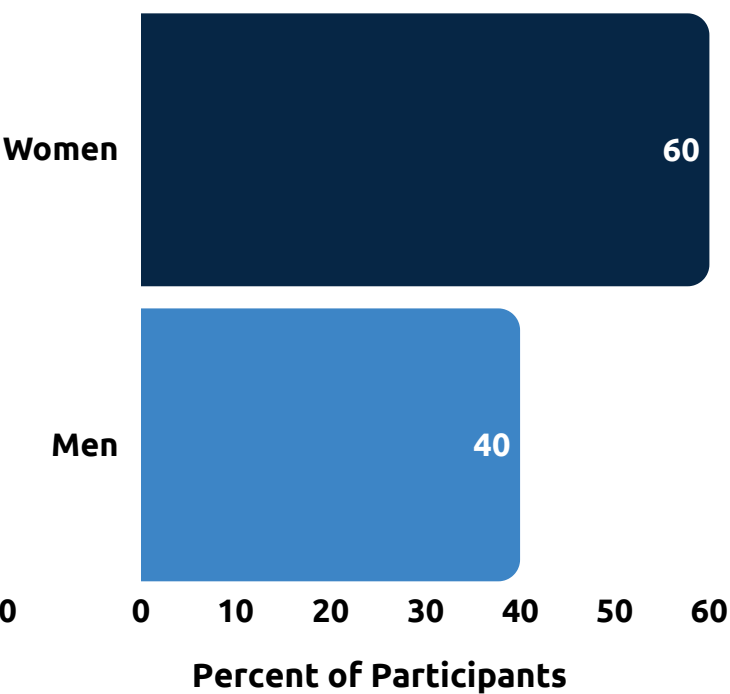
Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants:10

Race/Ethnicity



Gender Identity

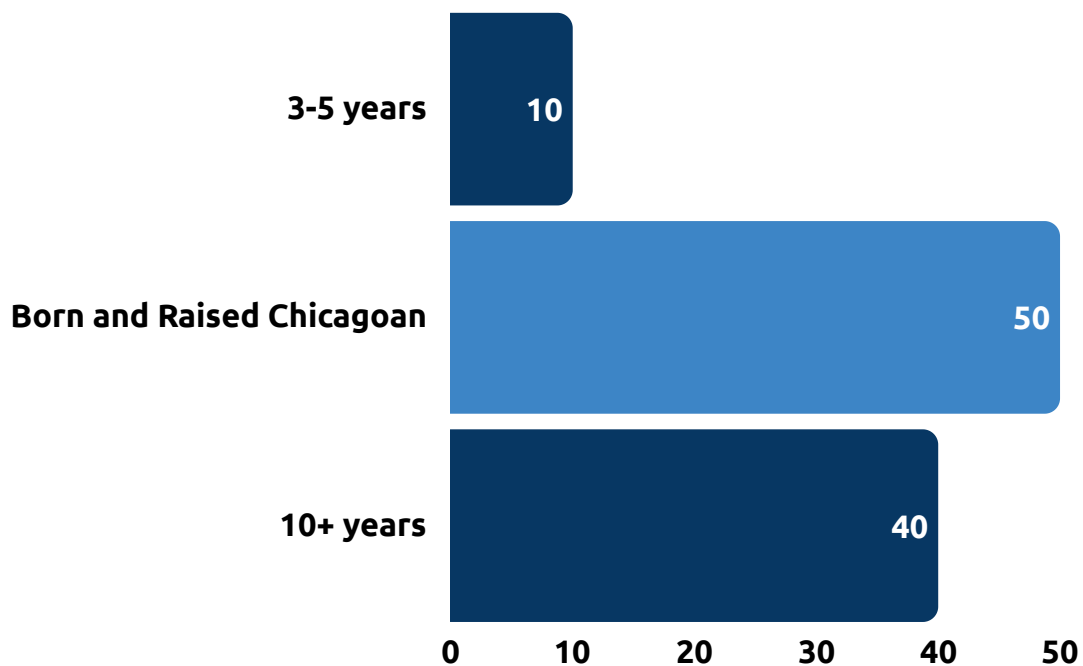


Demographics

Participant Demographics

Total Number of Participants:10

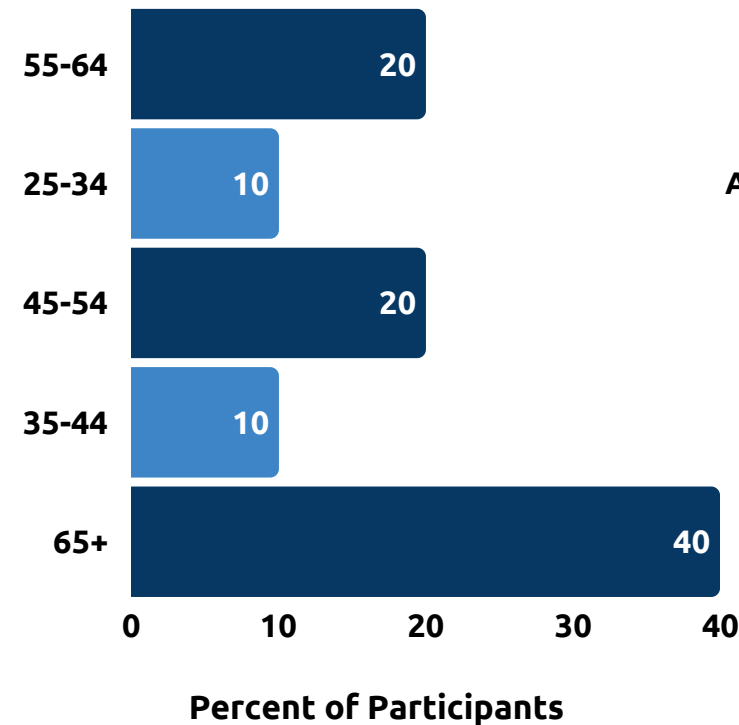
How long have you lived in Chicago?



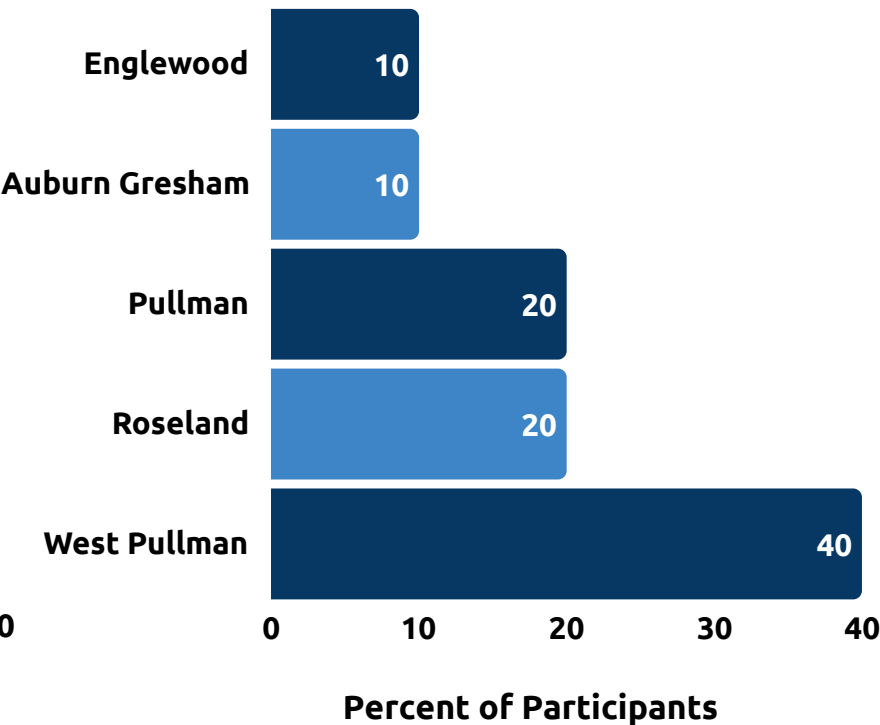
Demographics

Participant Demographics
Total Number of Participants:10

Age



Neighborhoods



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

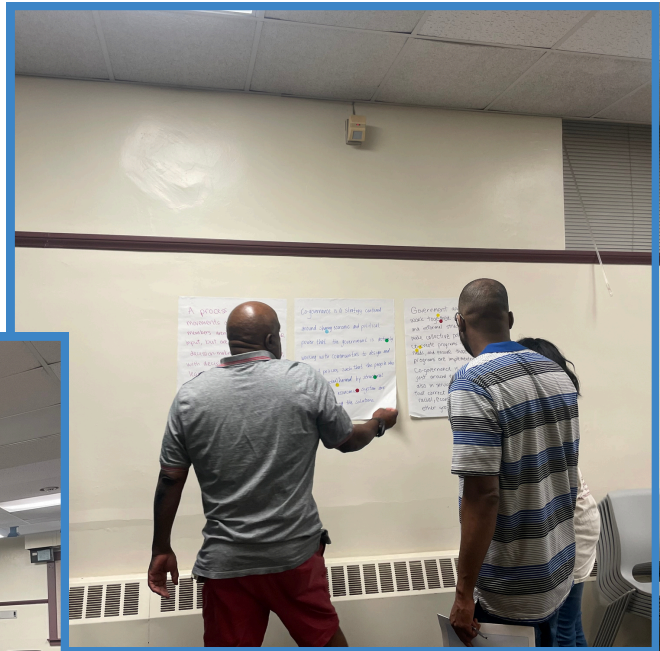
The lack of responsiveness from government officials, particularly in Southside communities, is frustrating and contributes to disparities compared to other areas of the city.

Transparent communication and frequent, meaningful engagement between government officials and community members, including active involvement in decision-making processes, are important.

Educating and involving youth in governmental processes is important for empowering future community leaders and fostering ongoing engagement.

Conversation Highlights

- "We need more frequent interaction with the Alderman, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Office. There should be committees that are the voice for the people, meeting at least four times a year."
- "Our young adults don't know how government works. Young people need to be trained. They need to be taught that they have a voice to speak out."
- "We don't have transparency. We need to know what's going on. It starts block by block."



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: Reflected on frustrations with issues such as lack of response from aldermen, unresolved safety concerns, and unaddressed infrastructure problems.

1

"Neutral" ratings: Noted that persistent efforts sometimes led to responses from 311 services or aldermen.

2

"Excellent" ratings: Noted understanding how to navigate 311 services led to better outcomes.

3

"No government engagement" ratings: Highlighted instances where personal connections or organizational ties facilitated better government interactions.

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

- Government responsiveness to the Southside is less attentive to community needs than Northside.
- Without personal connections or organizational backing, individual residents struggle to gain attention from government officials.
- More accessible and direct channels of communication to report issues and receive timely assistance is needed.

Participants also shared the following reflections in the participant handouts:

- **Difficult:** "I've been fighting for two years to get a \$100 ticket sign removed from my property, and the alderman's office no longer answers my calls."
- **Difficult:** "I was mugged at gunpoint walking to the bus stop because the area is poorly lit and overgrown with trees, but no action has been taken to address these safety concerns."
- **Difficult:** "We tried to secure a quorum for the 'Bringing Chicago Home' initiative but couldn't get enough aldermen to show up; it felt like they didn't care about the issue."
- **Difficult:** "Mental health services have been neglected for years, and centers remain closed despite the rising need during COVID."
- **Difficult:** "It's hard to trust a government that campaigns on listening to the community but disappears once elected."

Understanding Your Experience

Reflections

Participants also shared the following reflections in the participant handouts:

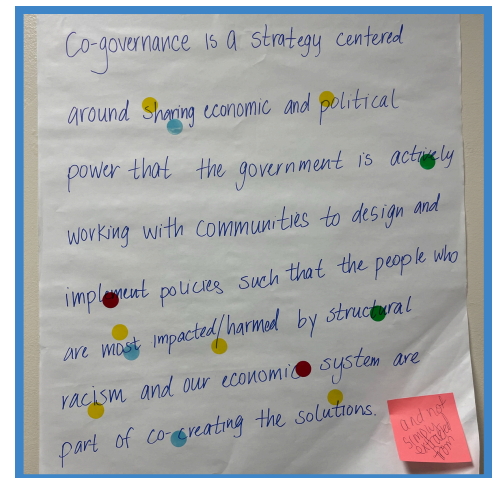
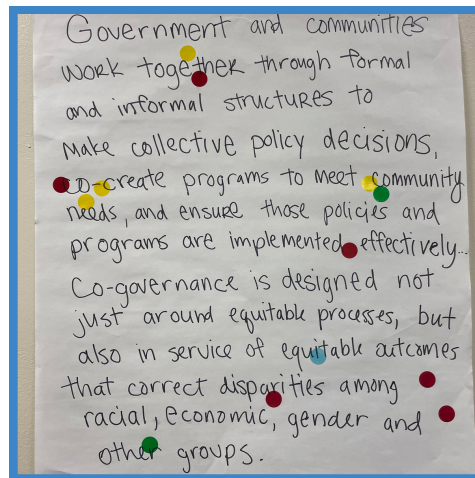
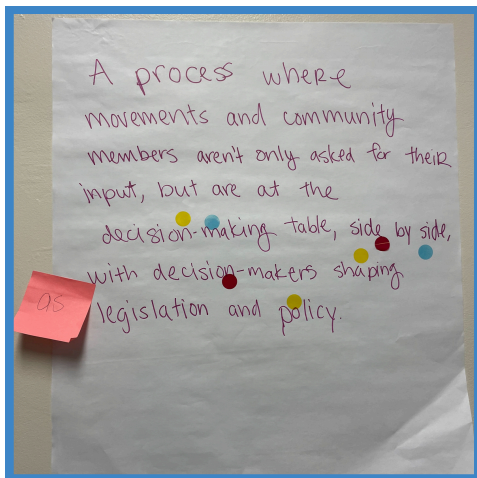
- **Difficult:** "Garbage piles up in front of my house, and I've struggled to get help from the alderman's office to resolve it."
- **Difficult:** "We're often ignored unless we approach government as a collective group; individual voices aren't respected the same way."
- **Excellent:** "I knew who to call and how to navigate the system, and it worked out well when I reached out to 311 and my alderman."
- **Neutral:** "311 services worked for me after multiple calls and emails; eventually, I got a response, and they addressed my issue."
- **Neutral:** "Calling an alderman's office on the Northside was easier and more effective than trying to reach out on the Southside."
- **No Engagement:** "I don't know where to start or who to contact to address my concerns, so I've avoided engaging with the government entirely."
- **No Engagement:** "I haven't had any interactions with the government; I avoid it because I don't think they will help."

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



- Government and communities working together
- Structural racism
- Co-governance is a strategy centered around sharing economic power.
- Government is actively working with communities to design and implement policies
- Community members aren't only asked for their input, but are at the decision-making table
- Center people who are most harmed by structural racism
- Economic and political power
- Correct disparities among racial, economic, gender, and other groups.
- Government and community members need to work side-by-side, making decisions together to reflect shared power.

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

- There must be mechanisms to hold government officials accountable for their actions, with clear roles and responsibilities outlined.
- Schools and community programs should prioritize teaching financial literacy, vocational training, and government processes to increase civic engagement.
- Effective communication channels like phone calls, emails, and community flyers should be utilized to keep residents informed and engaged.
- Block-by-block engagement with neighborhood-specific leadership structures can help address unique community challenges.
- Open communication will ensure residents have clear access to information about government actions and decisions.
- There should be regular community meetings, with committees acting as the voice of the people and meeting multiple times a year to address local concerns.
- Educating and empowering young people to understand and participate in governmental processes was highlighted as essential for fostering future leadership.
- Co-governance must address disparities in racial, economic, and gender equity, ensuring inclusive processes and outcomes

How Do You Define Co-Governance?



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

- Investing in local infrastructure, education, and community resources is vital for long-term co-governance success.
- Cultural competence must be integrated into government outreach to meet the needs of diverse communities.
- Focus on block-level representation, empowering local leaders to address specific neighborhood challenges.
- Co-governance should reflect shared power, with residents having equal influence in policy creation and implementation.
- Government processes should prioritize the voices of marginalized groups, ensuring those most impacted by policies are actively engaged.
- Frequent interaction between government and community members.
- Committees as representatives for local voices.
- Equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across neighborhoods.
- Proactive outreach to underrepresented communities.
- Building trust through consistent follow-through on community input.
- Youth involvement and education in government processes

