



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN: **WHATCOM COUNTY JUSTICE PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS**

Prepared by: The Vida Agency
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Overview

CONTEXT

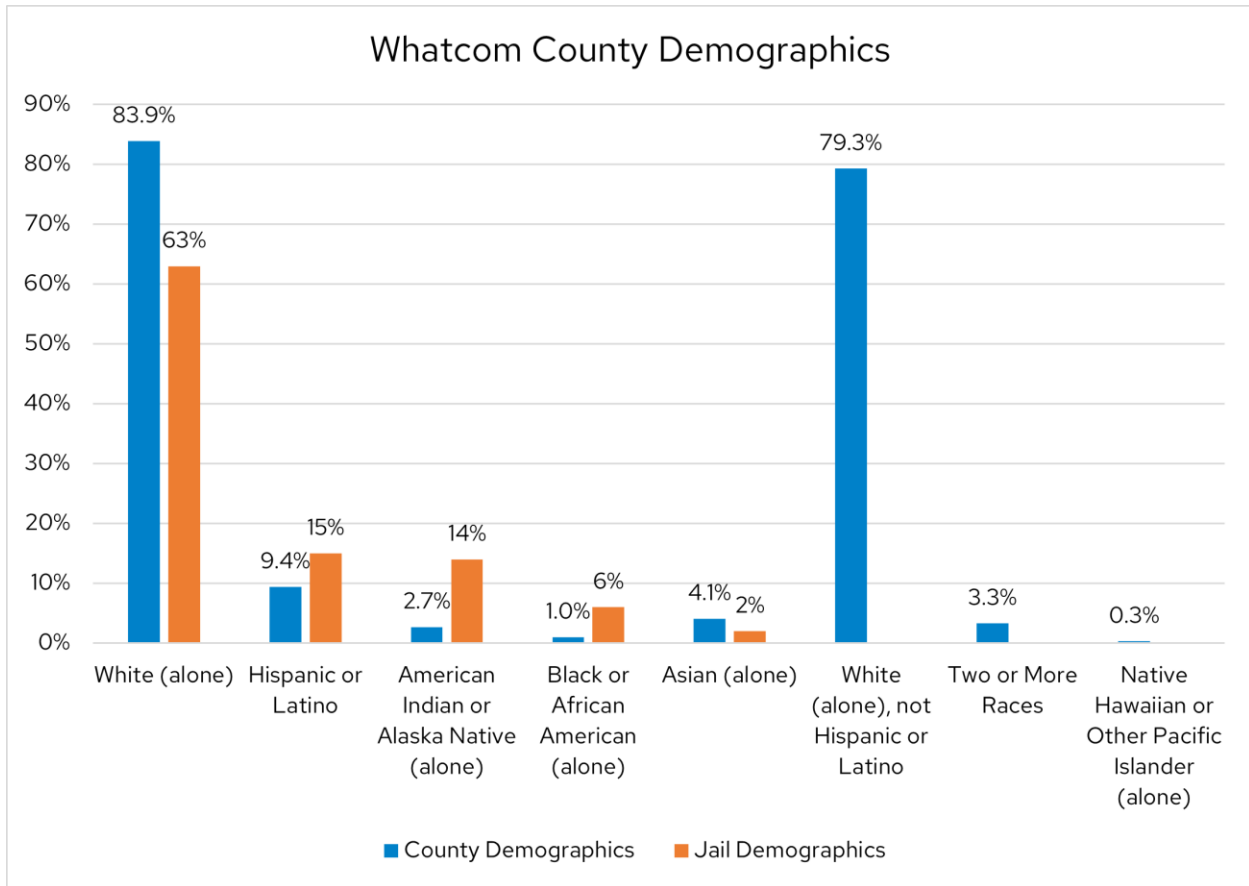
Whatcom County is experiencing stress on its criminal legal system including facilities and services. In 2022, building upon previous efforts, the Whatcom County Council, Executive, Sheriff and Prosecutor began a project to develop a needs assessment and established a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) to guide its development. The Needs Assessment report aims to provide guidance on infrastructure, facilities, and services before, during, and after incarceration, including behavioral health, substance use disorder and re-entry services. The County wants to engage the public in this project and hear their feedback on elements of the criminal legal system in our community. Additionally, the SAC needs to hear and consider public feedback as it guides the development of the Needs Assessment Report.

The following Engagement Plan has been informed by secondary research, which is detailed in Appendix A.

Framework

The Vida Agency (TVA), an Edmonds-based full-service communications agency, was hired in June 2022 to develop and implement a robust public engagement plan to reach the diverse communities of Whatcom County. We are recommending that the outreach efforts be focused on collecting feedback and recommendations from those who haven't been involved in previous conversations. In addition to this targeted strategy, we will also be administering a survey to capture input from Whatcom County's general public.

Further, the demographics of Whatcom County's general population and Whatcom County's incarcerated population highlight racial disparities within the Black, Indigenous, and Latinx populations. They represent a significantly larger percentage of the incarcerated population than the general population. Therefore, these three communities are part of our priority audience for public engagement.



* Whatcom County jail moved “Hispanic” from race to ethnicity in 2019. Therefore, the county and jail racial demographics above are from 2018 to account for the Hispanic population. There is no data for the jail population for the following three groups: “White (alone), not Hispanic or Latino,” “Two or More Races,” and “Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (alone).”

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GOALS

Community engagement work will begin in September 2022 to achieve the following goals:

Primary Goals

1. Learn if Whatcom County communities are familiar with current justice system services and limitations, and what they believe those services and limitations mean for their community.
2. Gather community priorities and recommendations for county justice system updates, including, but not limited to, services and facilities to fulfill the SAC Needs Assessment.
3. Gather community feedback on preferred funding mechanisms to fulfill county-level justice system priorities.
4. Understand community priorities around rehabilitation versus incarceration.
5. Gather community recommendations for service center locations.

Secondary Goals

1. Understand if the SAC’s current visions, values, and goals align with the community’s.

2. Educate Whatcom County communities on current justice system services and limitations.
3. How can the County rebuild community trust?

PRIORITY AUDIENCE

The priority audiences were selected because they capture a representative sample of diverse communities in Whatcom County. Further, the following communities use and/or engage with the justice system, and have not previously participated in efforts to collect feedback from the community at large, as outlined in Appendix A.

1. Whatcom County Voters, prioritizing:
 - a. Black communities
 - b. Latinx communities
 - c. Immigrant communities
 - d. Native peoples
 - i. Nooksack tribal members
 - ii. Lummi Nation tribal members
2. Individuals who have been previously incarcerated
3. Family members of individuals who have been previously incarcerated

STRATEGIC ANCHORS

1. **Transparency:** To share honest assessments, missions, and goals with the community to help repair trust.
2. **Ease of contact:** To encourage community participation and honor the commitment to engage with historically underrepresented communities.
3. **Security:** To provide welcoming spaces to share opinions, thoughts, fears, and desires without negative repercussions.
4. **Feasibility:** To gather recommendations that are both impactful and actionable.

Engagement

APPROACH

The Vida Agency will engage with communities by providing education on the current status of Whatcom County's justice system and through eliciting feedback to inform the County Needs Assessment. Gathering community insight and recommendations is the top priority, but providing education around the Justice Project will be used to initiate conversations and ground community in what Whatcom County currently faces.

With that said, the foundation for engagement will be to build trust. In order to promote community members in providing honest feedback, we must prioritize meeting them where they are at, investing in their needs, and encourage 360° feedback so community can see how their voices are making an impact. This community-to-community approach could be a starting point for continued trust building opportunities for the County.

The number of participants engaged with is not as important as ensuring that quality and honest feedback is gathered from a diverse audience. TVA values honoring space for storytelling and impact-sharing. Therefore, engagement success will be based on how many different *communities* were represented through our engagement efforts, rather than how many different *individuals* provided feedback.

TVA aims for extensive survey participation, so an appropriate participation level will be agreed upon by Whatcom County and TVA together as survey engagement is ongoing. The approved participation level will consider both number and demographics of participants.

Our engagement discussion points will be guided by the outline below:

Education

1. Overview of the SAC and the goal of engagement
2. Issues identified at the current jail facility
3. Currently offered behavioral services
4. SAC Values and Missions

Gathering Feedback

1. Feelings of safety in participants' communities
2. Incarceration versus rehabilitation strategies and priorities
3. How services should be funded
4. What services should be funded and/or prioritized
5. Does the SAC's values and mission align with the community's values?

To promote transparent community voices and create a safe and welcoming share-space, it may not be appropriate for SAC members to be present at every engagement; the SAC members' presence, and the number of SAC participants present, will be left up to the community.

TACTICS

DIRECT OUTREACH

In-person

TVA will host multiple events, with varying days and times for each community group, to accommodate different availabilities and cultural practices. Dates, locations and format and other logistics will be detailed in a workback plan once this Engagement Plan is approved by the SAC. While there will be multiple events for the same community, they will still have the same structure, format, and themes for discussion, which are stated as the project's Primary Goals above. Each community/culture defines the following differently; however, for the purpose of this engagement, TVA will consider the following:

- **Informal Gathering:** a loosely structured in-person event with nature of engagement defined by the specific community.
- **Listening Session:** a safe space for community members to provide input, which could include stories/experiences of personal, familial, or generational trauma, and/or direct suggestions on topic matter.
- **Informal Interview:** a loosely structured one-on-one conversation that takes place according to cultural preference and convenience of the interviewee.

1. Informal Gatherings with Tribal Nations, which will include:

- a. Up to three (3) in-person sessions.
- b. Two (2) TVA staff to facilitate and one (1) TVA staff to take notes. An event summary will be provided within one (1) week of event completion and will include the date of the event, agenda, the number of participants, and key findings.
- c. Printed lists, with QR codes to the online landing page, of currently offered behavioral services. Participants can take this document home to share with their communities.
- d. Participants will have a chance to function as survey recruiters by sharing the survey and Project Landing Page URL with their communities via the document mentioned above. Nobody will be required to share the survey, but TVA will track which method survey participants used to find the survey.
- e. TVA will provide time and travel compensation for participation.

2. Informal Interviews with Tribal Nations Elders, which will include:

- a. Up to ten (10) interviews
- b. Two (2) TVA staff to facilitate and take notes. An event summary will be provided within one (1) week of event completion and will include the date of the event, agenda, the number of participants, and key findings.
- c. Printed lists, with QR codes to the online landing page, of currently offered behavioral services. Participants can take this document home to share with their communities.

d. Participants will have a chance to function as survey recruiters by sharing the survey and Project Landing Page URL with their communities via the document mentioned above. Nobody will be required to share the survey, but TVA will track which method survey participants used to find the survey

e. TVA will provide time and travel compensation for participation

3. Listening Sessions with Immigrant Populations, which will include:

a. Up to two (2) sessions

b. Two (2) Spanish-speaking facilitators and one (1) Spanish-speaking note taker. An event summary will be provided within one (1) week of event completion and will include the date of the event, agenda, the number of participants, and key findings.

c. Copies of an informational sheet containing:

i. A timeline graphic with brief explanations

ii. The purpose and goals of the conversation, including the *KeepWashington Working Act* to reiterate that the events are prioritizing safety and privacy to immigrant attendees

iii. List of currently offered behavioral services

iv. QR code/URL to the Project Landing Page URL

d. Participants will have a chance to function as survey recruiters by sharing the survey and Project Website URL with their communities via the document mentioned above. Nobody will be required to share the survey, but TVA will track which method survey participants used to find the survey

e. TVA will provide time and travel compensation for participation

4. Informal Interviews with Immigrant Population Leaders, which will include:

a. Up to ten (10) interviews

b. One (1) Spanish-speaking facilitator and one (1) Spanish-speaking note taker. An event summary will be provided within one (1) week of event completion and will include the date of the event, agenda, the number of participants, and key findings.

c. Copies of an informational sheet containing:

i. A timeline graphic with brief explanations

ii. The purpose and goals of the conversation, including the *Keep Washington Working Act* to reiterate that the events are prioritizing safety and privacy of immigrant attendees

iii. List of currently offered behavioral services

iv. QR code/URL to the Project Landing Page URL

d. Participants will have a chance to function as survey recruiters by sharing the survey and Project Landing Page URL with their communities via the document mentioned above. Nobody will be required to share the survey, but TVA will track which method survey participants used to find the survey

e. TVA will provide time and travel compensation for participation

5. Listening Sessions with individuals, and/or their family members, who have been previously incarcerated, which will include:

a. Up to two (2) in-person sessions and up to two (2) virtual sessions. An event summary will be provided within one (1) week of event completion and will include the date of the event, agenda, the number of participants, and key findings.

b. Virtual and/or in-person facilitation

c. Copies of an informational sheet containing:

i. A timeline graphic with brief explanations

ii. List of currently offered behavioral services

iii. QR code/URL to the Project Landing Page URL

iv. Social media ads to promote survey responses

d. Participants will have a chance to function as survey recruiters by sharing the survey and Project Landing Page URL with their communities via the document mentioned above. Nobody will be required to share the survey, but TVA will track which method survey participants used to find the survey.

e. TVA will provide time and travel compensation for participation

Partner Outreach

TVA will partner with local community-based organizations (CBOs) that serve BIPOC communities and those formerly incarcerated to recruit survey participants. TVA will identify a CBO partner list and reach out to confirm interest and availability. Interested CBO partners will then be given a digital Outreach Packet, developed by TVA and outlined below, that can be used in educating their communities about the Justice Project and facilitate engagement with the online survey. The CBOs that TVA would like to engage with are:

- 1) The Restorative Community Coalition
- 2) Opportunity Council

3) Whatcom Family and Community Network

TVA is open to including additional CBOs recommended by the SAC and as budget allows.

SURVEY

TVA will draft, administer, recruit participants, monitor, and create a findings report for one (1) digital survey. Survey questions will be developed by TVA to address the primary goals stated above. All survey questions will be reviewed and approved by the County ahead of survey launch. Further details are outlined below:

1. Digital Survey
 - a. The survey will target Whatcom County's general public, Black communities, Latinx communities, previously incarcerated individuals and their families, immigrant communities, and tribal nations. Recruitment will be facilitated through CBO partnership, digital targeting, multicultural media engagement, and the utilization of an approved Whatcom County e-mail list.
 - b. The survey will serve unique questions dictated through survey logic for previously-incarcerated individuals and their families to gather experience-specific data.
 - c. A survey recruitment flyer with a hyperlink and QR code will be shared with CBOs and through e-mail blasts, to be drafted by TVA and disseminated by TVA and/or Whatcom County.
 - d. Survey questions will inquire about:
 - i. Who should be in the jail?
 - ii. Where should the jail be located?
 - iii. What behavioral health services are needed and where should they be located?
 - iv. What more is needed to reduce incarcerations and recidivism in our community?
 - v. How should the recommendations of the needs assessment report be funded?

MEDIA

TVA has built long-standing relationships with local and multicultural media outlets statewide who are trusted sources of news for their communities. TVA will promote listening sessions and recruit participation to the online survey via targeted paid display ad campaigns with a curated list of media outlets to reach the priority audience, which is included in Appendix C. These outlets provide information to local communities through a variety of channels such as radio, television, digital, and print news. In-language media will focus on the following: English and Spanish.

Priority Audience

- Black communities
- Latinx communities

- Immigrant communities
- Native American communities
- General population

Paid Engagement Tactics

- Ad buys
- Social media posts to recruit survey and in-person event participation

To support earned media efforts, TVA will draft a project overview press release for Whatcom County PIO to distribute.

- Press release
 - The press release will inform the public about the project, TVA's role, include an overview of the upcoming engagement opportunities for Whatcom County residents and inform people of the upcoming Project Landing Page URL that will include additional details.

DIGITAL

Social Advertisements

To supplement other survey recruitment methods, we will place paid ads across Facebook and Instagram from TVA social accounts. Ads will be seen as sponsored posts in user's news feeds as they browse the platforms. Ads will be geotargeted to the Lummi and Nooksack Reservations to increase responses from the indigenous community, as well as general Latinx targeting throughout the county.

Display Advertisements

As an additional way to reach the BIPOC and Native communities, we will implement display ads advertising the survey that are specifically targeted to these communities. These display ads will appear wherever our target audience is browsing the web. We will target one ad set in Spanish through the entire county. Another ad set will be English ads geofenced to the Lummi and Nooksack Reservations.

Creative

Based on TVA's extensive experience in engaging communities, we will be responsible for developing all creative materials with Whatcom County's review and approval. Whatcom County will be responsible for helping TVA locate relevant information for material content, such as a list of current behavioral services and the issues currently identified at the jail.

MESSAGING

We recommend developing multiple sets of messaging. The first set will be used for direct outreach with our priority communities and will honor community histories with the County. The messages will:

- Acknowledge past harm of the justice system in BIPOC communities
- Commit to listen to feedback and respect their voice
- Promise to follow up with results to convey transparency for continued trust-building

The second set will be used for communicating with the general public to take the survey. The messages will:

- Set the stage for why their feedback is important to the County
- Share how their input will be used
- Commit to being transparent in the engagement process

In both cases, the goal of the messaging will be to rebuild trust in the County, but the approach will vary depending on the community. The specific messages of this approach will be outlined in a Creative Brief for the County to approve ahead of any material development.

Key Message - Call to Action:

To make the goal of our engagement clear to community and to recruit survey and event participants, TVA's overarching call to action to all community groups will be to:

- 1) Call on the priority audiences to **shape the future** of incarceration in Whatcom County by:
 - a) Taking a Survey
 - b) Attending an In-Person Event

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT MATERIALS

- Informational Material in English and Spanish
 - Purpose of project, goals, mission, and Keep Washington Working Act, which will reiterate the safety for immigrant participants to attend our engagement opportunities..
 - Issues identified at current jail facility
 - List of currently offered behavioral services
 - Timeline graphic
 - Including jail history and the journey to the Justice Project
 - QR code to Project Landing Page
- Project Landing Page
 - The landing page will be externally hosted by TVA to allow for swift updates. It will be used to focus efforts and centralize information, including:
 - Purpose of project, goals, mission, and Keep Washington Working law
 - Issues identified at current jail facility
 - List of currently offered behavioral services
 - Timeline graphic

- Including jail history and the journey to the Justice Project
 - Link to survey
- Survey recruitment flyer in English and Spanish
 - A hyperlink and QR code will be included to accommodate digital and printed dissemination.
 - TVA will share a digital version of the survey recruitment flyer with CBOs and community partners.
 - TVA will share a printed version of the survey recruitment flyer with in-person event participants.
 - CBOs and community partners will be notified they can print the survey recruitment flyers and place them in community hubs, or pass them out to community members, as they see fit.
- Media and social media graphics
- CBO Digital Outreach Packet, which will include:
 - Informational Material
 - Social media survey graphics
 - Survey recruitment flyer

Analysis and Reporting

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Metrics

TVA will monitor and report engagement impact through:

1. Digital marketing metrics
 - a. Clicks and impressions
2. In-person event participation
 - a. Number of participants per event
 - b. Participant demographics
 - i. Participants will be provided an opportunity to declare their sex, ethnicity, age, and zip code. They may decline to answer.
3. Survey participation
 - a. Number of participants
 - b. Participant demographics
 - i. Participants will be provided an opportunity to declare their sex, ethnicity, age, and zip code. They may decline to answer.
 - c. Method of survey recruitment (CBO, flyer, family/friend, social media, etc.)
4. Media metrics
 - a. Global outlet reach

b. Clicks

TVA may adjust engagement and recruitment tactics if needed to accommodate community needs to successfully garner community participation.

Cadence

- In-person event participation and survey participation will be reported to the client on a weekly basis once engagement begins.
- Digital marketing and media metrics will be reported to the client in the final engagement summary for the Needs Assessment.

FINAL REPORTS

At the conclusion of our community engagement, TVA will provide final reports, to be included in the Stakeholder Advisory Committee Needs Assessment, in the format of:

- One (1) Survey Findings Summary, to include:
 - Survey Development Summary, including:
 - Logistics
 - Survey Goals
 - Monitoring and Analysis Tactics
 - Participant Demographics compared to Whatcom County Demographics
 - Key Findings
 - Participant Feedback
 - Feedback by Demographic Segments
 - Survey Questions, as an Appendix
- One (1) Public Engagement Summary, to include:
 - Engagement Tactics Summary
 - Details of Each Event, including:
 - Number of Participants Per Event
 - Participant Demographics
 - Contingent on participants self-identifying
 - Key Findings
 - Participant Feedback
 - Feedback by Demographic Segments
 - Photos of Engagement
 - Contingent on consent being granted by participants

Anticipated Timeline

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

WEEK OF	ACTIVITY
SEPTEMBER 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Press Release development • Creative Brief development • Messaging development
SEPTEMBER 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client review of Press Release draft • Meeting to review Creative Brief and Messaging with client
SEPTEMBER 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press Release Launch • Messaging updates with client feedback • Creative material development • Project Landing Page development • Survey development
OCTOBER 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative material development • Survey development • Project Landing Page development
OCTOBER 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client provides feedback on Creative materials • Project Landing Page development • Client reviews survey and provides edits
OCTOBER 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize creative materials • Project landing page launch • Finalize survey
OCTOBER 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch survey • Launch digital ad campaign • Interviews with Tribal Elders • Interviews with Immigrant Population Leaders
OCTOBER 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey monitoring and engagement report development • Interviews with Tribal elders • Interviews with Immigrant Population Leaders • Listening session with previously incarcerated individuals and/or their families
NOVEMBER 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey monitoring and engagement report development • Informal gatherings with tribal nations • Listening sessions with Immigrant communities • Listening session with previously incarcerated individuals and/or their families

NOVEMBER 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey monitoring and engagement report development • Informal gatherings with tribal nations • Listening sessions with Immigrant communities • Close survey on November 18th
NOVEMBER 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal gatherings with tribal nations • Listening sessions with Immigrant communities • Survey findings summary development • Public engagement summary development
NOVEMBER 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public engagement summary development • Survey findings summary development • Send first draft of engagement summaries to client by December 2nd
DECEMBER 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client provides feedback on engagement summaries
DECEMBER 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TVA delivers final public engagement summary and survey findings summary