

S.A.F.E. Community Civic Empowerment Toolkit

Welcome & Purpose

This toolkit is created by S.A.F.E. to support community members—especially people of color, marginalized groups, and those historically excluded from decision making—in understanding how local government works and how to engage safely, effectively, and collectively.

Understanding Local Power

Local decisions about housing, education, public safety, transportation, and environmental health often impact communities differently. S.A.F.E. centers equity because policy outcomes are shaped by who is included in the process.

How Policy Impacts Marginalized Communities

Even when policies appear neutral, they can reinforce inequities when lived experience is missing from decision making spaces. S.A.F.E. encourages community members to engage with policy through an equity lens.

How to Engage:

1. Attend meetings in person or virtually when possible.
2. Submit public comments individually or as a group.
3. Email or request meetings with elected officials.
4. Organize community voices around shared concerns.
5. Document impacts and shared lived experience respectfully and strategically.

Community Care & Sustainability

Civic engagement can be exhausting—especially for communities already navigating systemic barriers. S.A.F.E. promotes shared leadership, rest, and mutual support as essential parts of sustainable organizing.

Tracking an Issue

Issue or concern:

Why this issue matters:

Communities impacted:

Where the decision is being made:

Desired outcome:

Story Collection

Storyteller (optional):

Issue area:

What happened:

Why it matters:

What change is needed:

Preparing Public Comment

Meeting or decision-making body:

Main message:

Community impact:

Specific request:

Notes:

Plain Language Email Template

Subject: Community Concern Regarding [Issue]

Opening: I am a community member writing to share a concern about...

Impact: This issue affects our community by...

Accessibility & Equity Notes

S.A.F.E. encourages engagement that is accessible and safe. Community members may request language access, virtual participation, disability accommodations, or choose collective engagement when individual participation feels unsafe.