

An Analysis of Public Engagement with State Environmental Boards and Commissions

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BACKGROUND

Environmental-focused state boards and commissions are important in governing natural resources and sustainability efforts within a state's jurisdiction. Public engagement in this space is vital for advancing more equitable and just decision-making that is representative of state constituents. Currently, the accessibility of necessary information for public engagement such as contact information, application instructions/qualifications, and directions for meeting participation, are limited and often difficult to access.

PURPOSE

This project aims to assess the current access to vital information for public engagement with state boards and commissions addressing environmental concerns in states where racial and ethnic populations make up 50% or more of the total population (and Colorado). This project will contribute to the enhancement of public engagement with state environmental boards and commissions.

METHODOLOGY

States whose racial and ethnic populations, as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau, are 50% or more were selected to examine public engagement with their environmentally focused boards and commissions. The following states were identified and examined: California, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, New Mexico, and Texas. Additionally, Colorado was selected to examine the local context of this topic. For each state, all boards and commissions were screened through a standardized process to identify those with an "environmental" scope

PROCESS

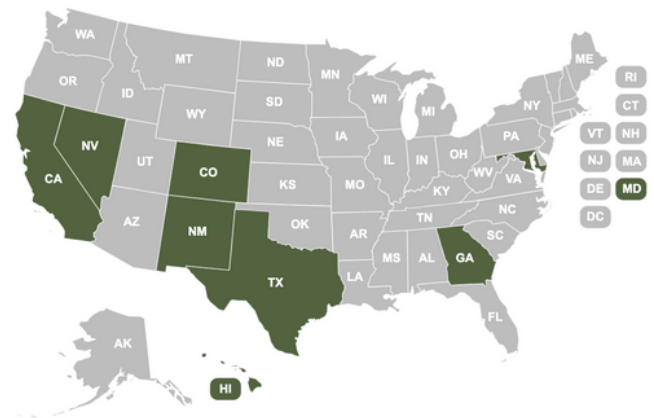
Students designed a rubric that examined the performance of public engagement elements vital for constituent involvement in state-level boards and commissions. The following elements were analyzed:

- Website existence
- Purpose/Role of Board/Commission
- Board/Commission contact information
- List of board members
- Board members'/commissioners' contact information
- Meeting history and agenda minutes
- Public engagement opportunity (Meeting frequency, Participation in agenda/online forum)
- Board Member/Commissioner Service (Tenure, Terms, Quotas, Compensation/Reimbursement – information available/listed)
- Accessibility (Website-specific language accessibility, site accessibility statement)

Using the state's website for each environmental board/commission, a score from 0–4 was recorded based on the quality and availability of the information (0 representing unavailable information and 4 representing excellence). The scores for each category were averaged as a final score for each state, representing their accessibility level for public engagement.

Over 300
Boards &
Commissions
examined

Engaged with
Board/ Commission
staff and members
in 8 states



DELIVERABLES

1. Publish a report on our findings and research
2. Send customized recommendations to Governors and/or Legislators in the eight states examined
3. A suite of data and resources for the Next 100 Coalition to utilize for their efforts in the policy space

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