



Somerville Schools CAG

Survey & Focus Group Development

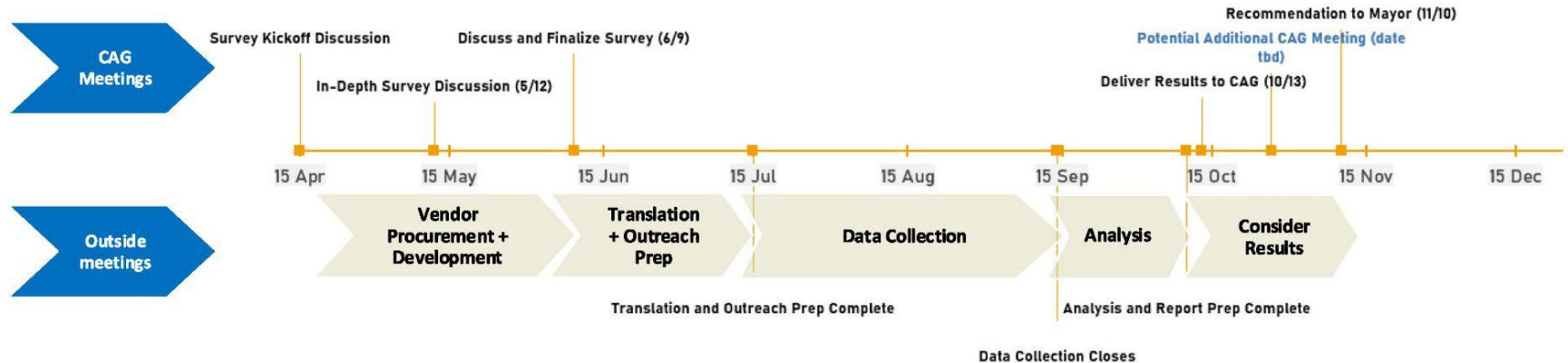
MAY 12, 2025

D/R/E/A/M COLLABORATIVE P.1

AGENDA

- Introduction (10 MIN)
 - Engagement schedule
 - Goals & roles
- Lessons Learned (10 MIN)
 - First impressions
 - Group Discussion
- First Suggestions (25 MIN)
 - Topics and Format
 - Relevant vs Less Relevant Topics
 - Group Discussion
- Focus Groups (20 MIN)
 - What topics, what groupings
 - Group Discussion
- Next steps (10 MIN)

Engagement Process – Detailed Timeline



Goals and Roles

CAG's role is to help develop **recommendations** on the location and scope of the new school – including through **public surveys** and **focus groups** – which will be considered by the Mayor. This includes 3 questions:

Where should a new Winter Hill school be located? Should it include the Brown School, or, if not, what is the plan for Brown? What do these choices mean for the Somerville School District and City as a whole?

Also important: advancing the project through **MSBA** funding and building public support for a **debt override**

— LESSONS LEARNED (10 MIN)

First Impressions

- Defining best topics for survey, versus focus groups or other processes
- Using same format for responses precludes more nuanced insights
- Possible other question formats:
 - Ordering / ranking
 - Trade-offs
 - Working with a 'budget'
- Provide more background info for each topic? Link to upcoming website?

Lessons Learned: Group Discussion



- Are there topics to be included or removed?
- Do you have any feedback on how the questions were framed?
- What additional information or graphics would have helped?

— FIRST SUGGESTIONS (25 MIN)

First Suggestions

Survey questions should focus on **topics needed to inform** recommendation.

Some **topics could be omitted because they might be similar regardless of which site is chosen** (such as degree of energy efficiency), or might be addressed through future rebalancing of schools.

Some **topics could be omitted because they will be evaluated through space planning**, design, cost estimating by architects & other contractors hired by City's OPM for MSBA process.

First Suggestions

Example of Different Question Formats

Choosing Preferences	Ranking Choices	Weighing Tradeoffs	Allocating a “Budget”
<p><i>“How much do you agree with this statement?”</i></p> <p>For ex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having neighborhood, walkable schools all across Somerville• Raise taxes if needed because schools are important	<p><i>“Please put these priorities in your preferred order.”</i></p> <p>For ex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximizing amenities for Winter Hill School• Addressing Brown’s needs now	<p><i>“Which of these two competing priorities is more important to you?”</i></p> <p>For ex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a larger, more efficient school vs. maximizing walkability• Having a small Brown school vs. risk of not getting MSBA funding when needed	<p><i>“How would you allocate 100 points to different priority buckets?”</i></p> <p>For ex:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Starting construction sooner• Impact on overall open space / at Trum• Having a walkable schools in all neighborhoods

First Suggestions: Group Discussion



- Do you find the suggested question formats helpful (Preferences, Ranked Choice, Trade Offs, or Allocating a “Budget”)?
- What additional information or graphics could we include, if any (within limits of keeping survey short and accessible)?

— FOCUS GROUPS (20 MIN)

Focus Groups

- Survey: high-level citywide input on discrete questions
- Focus group: specialized user groups discuss complex, nuanced questions

CAG Role

- Tonight: recommend Focus Group topics / formats, help promote participation
- June CAG meeting: Refine & finalize list of Focus Groups
- Fall: incorporate feedback into recommendations to Mayor

Focus Group Structure

- Approximately 10 participants per group
- DREAM & City co-lead 4 discussions; City/SPS to lead 1 to 6 additional discussions as appropriate
- City will take notes, possibly audio record

Focus Group Topics

Example: Brown School options, assuming it remains in the current location

- Involve school community as well as wider neighborhood
- What does it mean to rebuild in place? (i.e. interim classrooms, construction staging)
- Where would students go if a structural emergency requires moving out of school?
- Any changes to size / grades, additional facilities, catchment area?
- Is there a way for City to pay for Brown upgrades without MSBA or debt exclusion?
- If Brown School is closed, what should be done with the building / site?

Focus Groups: Discussion



- Other suggestions for Focus Group topics?
- Should we explore combining different interest groups?

Next Steps: Survey Development Subcommittee

- Coordination with survey design subcommittee
- Role over next month: finalize survey questions and supporting information / graphics
- Full CAG reviews survey at June 9 meeting, 1 round of minor edits afterwards
- Logistics:
 - 2 to 3 meetings between today's May 12 CAG and Monday June 9 CAG?
 - Daytime? Day of week? Remote/zoom?
 - Keep feedback & discussion to these meetings for most inclusive & equitable participation
 - Follow ground rules to ensure productive & efficient discussions