

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO ADVANCE EQUITY

OFFICE OF HEALTH EQUITY
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

WHO?

The Office of Health Equity developed these questions for use by local and state government, non-profit and community based organizations. These questions are intended to help users thoughtfully engage with communities, and avoid unintentionally perpetuating inequities.

WHAT?

Community engagement is a two-way exchange of information, ideas and resources. Community engagement should offer opportunities for communities to exercise power in decision-making. It should also consider the diversity of our communities—including culture and ethnicity—and seek to create an inclusive and accessible process.

WHY?

Community wisdom is necessary for health. Communities know intuitively what they need to be healthy, and equity and justice cannot be achieved without thoughtful and relevant community engagement. Solutions to complex problems are more effective when systems and professionals incorporate nontraditional and underrepresented voices of the community, respect lived experience, and work within community cultures, beliefs and values.

WHEN?

These questions are intended to be used in recurring or standing meetings, such as monthly team meetings. Apply this guide early, during the decision making process and prior to the planning phase to ensure thoughtful community engagement.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT WAYS TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY?

Yes, community engagement is as unique as communities themselves.

Although there is variability in the way you operationalize community engagement, the following principles should consistently guide your work (adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation):

- Value and prioritize lived experience and community voice
- Commit to full transparency and accountability
- Acknowledge that there are institutional, systemic and structural barriers that perpetuate inequity which has silenced the voice of the community over time
- Commit to partnership in the co-creation and co-ownership of solutions

Community Engagement Spectrum

This community engagement continuum was created by staff at CDPHE and adapted from the Centers For Disease Control’s national model. It shows that as community involvement, impact, trust and communication flow increases so does the community’s level of ownership and empowerment

Colorado’s Community Engagement Spectrum				
Increasing Level of Community Involvement, Impact, Trust and Communication Flow				
Increasing Ownership, Empowerment Skills, Opportunities and Supports of Both Staff and Community				
Please note: Each level has value				
Participation		Engagement		Partnership
Outreach	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Share Leadership
Communication flows from the program or initiative to <u>inform</u> community members.	Community members <u>provide one-time or periodic feedback</u> .	Communication flows both ways and community members provide <u>ongoing participation</u> .	Community members <u>influence decision-making</u> .	Community members <u>share power and responsibility</u> making decisions together.
<u>Outcome</u> : Optimally establishes communication and outreach channels, while sharing information with the community.	<u>Outcome</u> : Develops connections	<u>Outcome</u> : Establishes visibility of the partner and increased cooperation.	<u>Outcome</u> : Increased trust and partnership-building.	<u>Outcome</u> : A strong partnership with bidirectional trust that affects broader community health outcomes.
Adapted from CDC: McCloskey et al. (2011). Community Engagement: Definitions and Organizing Concepts from the Literature, <i>Principles of Community Engagement: Concepts and Definitions from the Literature</i> (p 8).				

Questions to inform thoughtful Community Engagement

Purpose

- How is community defined for this project, program or process?
- Why are you interested in engaging with community members?
- What level(s) of engagement along the spectrum are appropriate for your project?
- What steps have you taken to involve community in defining the goal of your program/project?
- What communities will be affected by your project or program?

Understanding capacity

- In what capacity have you worked on community engagement - currently or in the past?
- How will you provide compensation for community members?
- How will you provide reimbursement for transportation and/or childcare so families can participate?

Understanding the community

- What has been the history of engagement efforts in this community in the past?
 - What has been successful and what has not been successful?
- Are there trusted partners working within the community with whom you can collaborate?
- What are the priorities of affected communities and stakeholders?
- How has the community been affected by health disparities?
- Who is affected by, involved in, or has a specific interest in the issue you are addressing?
- Have you gathered adequate background information about the affected populations you intend to reach (i.e. language or dialect spoken, customs, historical or geographical data, etc.)?
 - What is your plan to address language and literacy needs including translations, interpretations and reading levels?

Communication

- How will you clearly communicate with community members to define expectations?
 - What expectations do they have of you?
 - What expectations do you have of community members?
- How will you receive feedback from community partners?

Decision making process

- Do the affected communities have power in the decision making process?
- Is there a process in place for maintaining communication with community members throughout the duration of the project?
- How will affected communities be informed of decisions and receive project/program updates?

Evaluation and Monitoring

- Is there a system in place for public accountability?
- How are affected communities involved in defining 'success' and outcomes?
- How are outcomes reported back to the community?
- Have you communicated results back to all impacted communities (including the communities who are not able to benefit)?

Questions to Ask When Planning Community meetings

Location

- Does the community have a traditional meeting location where you can hold the meeting?
If not, is there a location that is geographically close to the community?
Is the meeting location accessible through public transportation?
- Is the location accessible for those with disabilities?

Purpose

- What is the purpose of this community meeting?
- Have you clearly communicated with community members to define expectations?
What expectations do they have of you?
What expectations do you have of community members?

Timing

- How can you and/or your staff accommodate community members to hold evening or weekend meetings, if that is what is needed?

Critical Accommodations

- Have you arranged for childcare?
- Can you provide transportation vouchers or reimburse for transportation?
- What languages are spoken in the community and do you need to provide interpretation services?
- Have you determined if any community members need other resources to fully and actively participate in the meeting (i.e. examine ADA requirements)?
- Have you communicated results back to all impacted communities (including the communities who are not able to benefit)?

For guidance or consultation on the use of this document please contact:
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Please note this guide is best used along with “Checking Assumptions to Advance Equity”.