

Tools for Integrating an Equity Lens

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

Community engagement refers to the inclusion of the end user in program planning, implementation, and evaluation with the purpose of influencing decisions and improving outcomes. The Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment developed community engagement documents through a work group process that captured Colorado’s Maternal and Child Health Program staff expertise, as well as a literature review of community engagement standards and measures. The resulting community engagement continuum (below) builds on three assumptions: authenticity and motivation. Professionals must be authentic in their approach to engaging community members, integrating personal vulnerability and a sense of hospitality in the processes and efforts.

Community Engagement Continuum				
Increasing level of community involvement, impact, trust and communication flow				
→				
Increasing ownership, empowerment, skills, opportunities and supports of both staff and community				
Participation		Engagement		Partnership
Outreach	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Share Leadership
Communication flows from the program or initiative to inform community members.	Community members provide one-time or periodic feedback.	Communication flows both ways and community members provide ongoing participation.	Community members influence decision-making.	Community members share power and responsibility making decisions together.
Outcome: To establish communication and outreach channels, while sharing information with the community.	Outcome: To develop connections.	Outcome: To establish visibility of the partner and increased cooperation.	Outcome: Increased trust and partnership-building	Outcome: A strong partnership, with bidirectional trust, that affects broader community health outcomes.

Adapted from CDC’s Report “Principles of Community Engagement: Concepts and Definitions from the Literature and Wong, N. T., Zimmerman, M. A., & Parker, E. A. (2010). A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. American Journal of Community Psychology, 46, 100–114.

It should be noted that each level in the process has value, regardless of where it falls on the continuum.

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SPECIFIC STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

To engage community members meaningful across the different levels of the continuum, many different strategies can be used. The lists below help in thinking through how to act at each level of the continuum and outline core standards for the practice of engaging community members.

Outreach Strategies: Share information with community members through:

- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, community listservs and forums, etc.)
- Community bulletin boards (e.g., in libraries, schools, grocery stores, recreation centers, faith organizations)
- Public-centric learning opportunities and conferences (such as parent workshops, youth and family summits, support groups)
- Community-based events such as health fairs and festivals, or meetings, such as block groups
- Existing community groups' or organizations' communication channels (groups may include, for example, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, PTAs, neighborhood organizations, cooperative development groups)

Consulting Strategies: Share information and gather feedback and perspectives from community members through:

- Focus groups (informal or formal)
- Traditional surveys through email or key informants
- Social media trending, polls, and surveys
- Youth and family advisors
- Participating in community groups or organizations' events/meetings
- Hosting community conversations, town hall meetings or other events to learn from the community

Engagement Strategies: Involve, collaborate, and share leadership by:

- Inviting those who participated in the above-mentioned focus groups, community events, key informant interviews, etc. to participate in a follow up planning meetings to share their experiences and stories that highlight assets, strengths, gaps, and barriers, in addition to recommendations for how to improve the situation/program/initiative
- Providing the necessary supports (e.g. compensation, child care, travel costs) to community members on a coalition or work group so they are able to participate and provide input
- Ensuring community members who regularly participate on a coalition or work group are equal decision-makers.
- Hiring advisors from the priority population to co-lead a committee, project or program/initiative where they have equal voting power as other members

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Standards for Engagement

- **Involvement:** Identify and involve the people and organizations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement.
- **Support:** Identify and overcome any barriers to involvement.
- **Planning:** Gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken.
- **Methods:** Agree to and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose.
- **Working Together:** Agree to and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently.
- **Sharing Information:** Ensure necessary information is communicated between the participants.
- **Working with Others:** Work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement.
- **Improvement:** Develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants.
- **Feedback:** Provide feedback on the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the standards for community engagement.

SOURCE: Scotland National Standards for Community Engagement; Accessed April 23, 2015 at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/94257/0084550.pdf>

The tools and guidance in document were developed and collected by the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE).



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