Improving Health Equity with Community Engagement

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Dr. Jeffrey D. Howard, Commissioner
There is no one size fit’s all approach
Feedback from local grantees

• What’s working well?
• What was your biggest challenge?
• What would you tell another community just getting started?
• What technical assistance would be helpful?

Partners, Partners, Partners
Community Engagement

The **process** of building permanent relationships with community members who will **work side-by-side** with you as an **ongoing** partner, in any and every way imaginable, building an army of support for your mission, with the end **goal of making the community a better place to live.**
How do you engage your community?

Consumer
- What are your needs?
- How can we meet those needs?
- “Come participate in this awesome event we’ve planned!”

Partner
- What issues in the community concern you?
- What are your community strengths?
- How can we help?
- How can you contribute to helping us find a solution?
- “Come help us decide how to improve and design our programming so that it is something your family and neighbors want.”
## What’s your approach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Weakness/Deficit</td>
<td>Strength/Asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who defines the problem?</strong></td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of decision making</strong></td>
<td>Central to decision making</td>
<td>Resource to community problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary decision makers</strong></td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community’s control of resources</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community’s potential ownership</strong></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Different Partners

Informal

- Neighborhood Associations
- Parent Teacher Association
- Church Groups
- Youth Groups
- Tenant Association

Formal

- Health agencies
- Cooperative Extension
- Business
- Media
- Government
Identify people most affected by the issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who are the people most affected by the issue?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where do they go to shop, work, socialize, access information, school or church?</td>
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<tr>
<td>In what ways can you support the other interest of these groups?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What obstacles could prevent participation?</td>
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Stakeholder Analysis

Who do you have at your table? Who is missing?

What are the strengths and gaps in current membership?

Who else do we need?

Who else cares about your issue?
Lesson’s learned

• Old habits are hard to break
• A community’s historical context is important
• Local dynamics deserve consideration
• Value people as experts in their own experience
• Culture matters
Tips on Engagement

• Identify who is missing, not the usual suspects
• Buy out the barriers
• Go to their table
• Listen intentionally, not for what you want to hear
• Follow the 80/20 rule (listening/talking)
• Ease into it
• Empower others
Methods of Engagement

• Join an existing event or activity
• Use non-threatening, personal questions that can help someone tell a story
• Photo Voice
• At health fairs, have one person at the table and another person in a quiet room ready to have a conversation
• Find the connectors
Training: The Art of Working Together

Muhlenberg County, Cooperative Extension, May 2018

www.georgeellalyon.com
Black Out Poetry

A process, not an outcome

We often think about projects in terms of outcomes. Community engagement is a process of getting to the right people, deep listening and nurturing relationships. Your numbers will be small and your success may be unquantifiable. Over time, you will learn more about a community, build meaningful relationships and build support for developing healthy communities.

- Community Engagement Grantees
Culture is a determining factor on community capacity.

Culturally-responsive approaches to community health development can add value and build credibility by helping define and execute a concise improvement agenda that fits the community of interest.
Thank you!

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