

Creating Health Equity Through Community Engagement

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Community engagement is a process through which community members are empowered to own the change they want to see and involves communication, problem-solving, governance, and decision-making skills and strategies.

-PolicyLink, Kirwan Institute, 2012



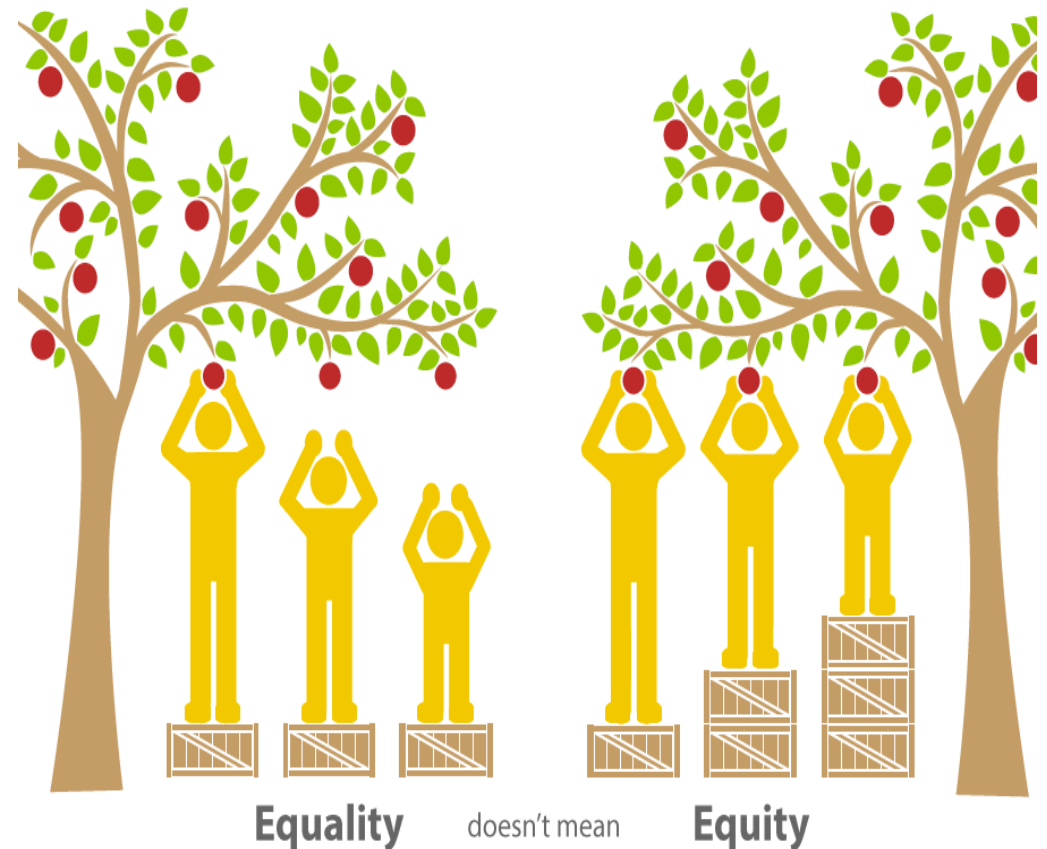
Why engage the community?

- Honors most valuable resource => PEOPLE
- Fosters connectedness and trust
- Supports assessment
- Strengthens capacity
- Enhances effectiveness of interventions
- Promotes sustainability



Why is an equity lens important

- Not one-size fits all
- Equity does not “trickle down”
- Without being explicit = widening gaps and disparities



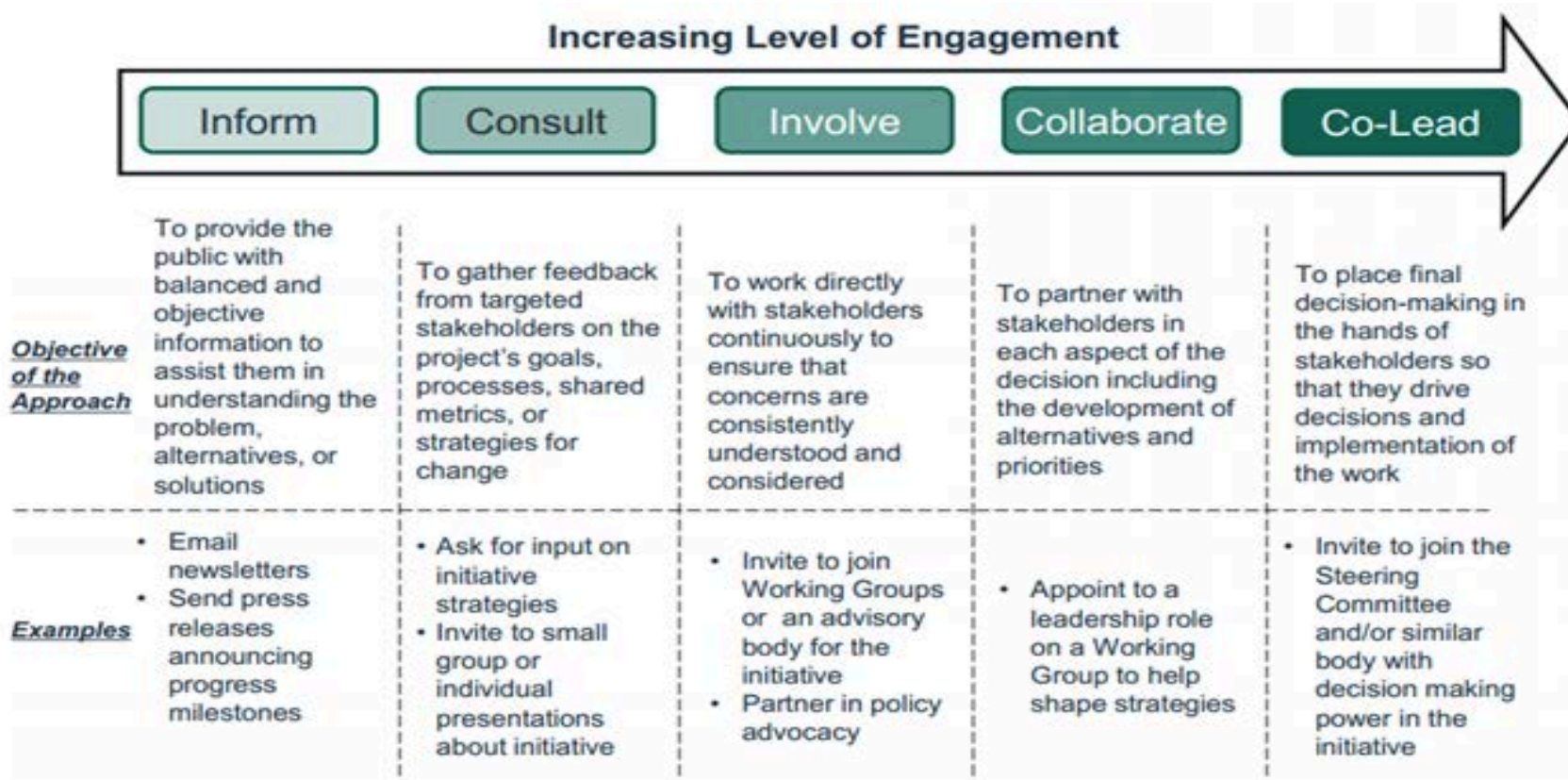
Assess and address organizational barriers

Organizational Barriers

- Time
- Financial resources
- Staff capacity and skills
- Partnerships

Organizational Barriers: Time & Resources

Determine level of engagement



Source: Collective Impact Forum, adapted from Tamarack Institute and IAP2

<https://www.livingcities.org/blog/812-working-with-communities-to-advance-racial-equity-and-eliminate-disparities>

Organizational Barriers: Staff Capacity & Skills

Applying an equity lens

- Assess the readiness of organization/coalition
 - Leadership support
 - Resources
 - Commitment to the (long-term) process
 - Willingness to be uncomfortable



Organizational Barriers: Staff Capacity & Skills

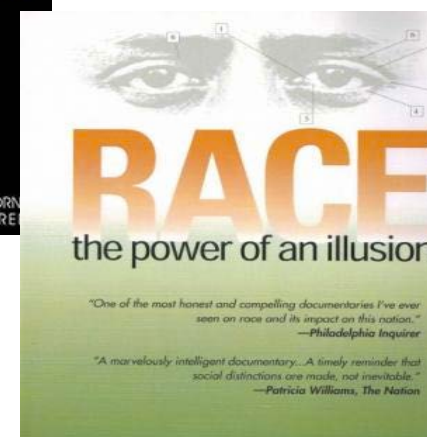
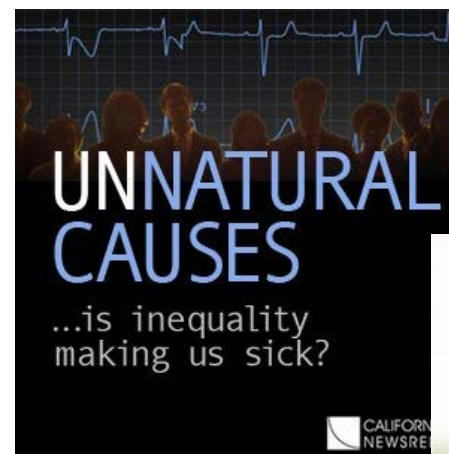
Applying an equity lens

- Define equity
- Understand disparities and inequities in your region and why they exist
- Name and address the “isms”
- Be explicit about equity outcomes
- Address root causes
- Ensure affected groups are “at the table”



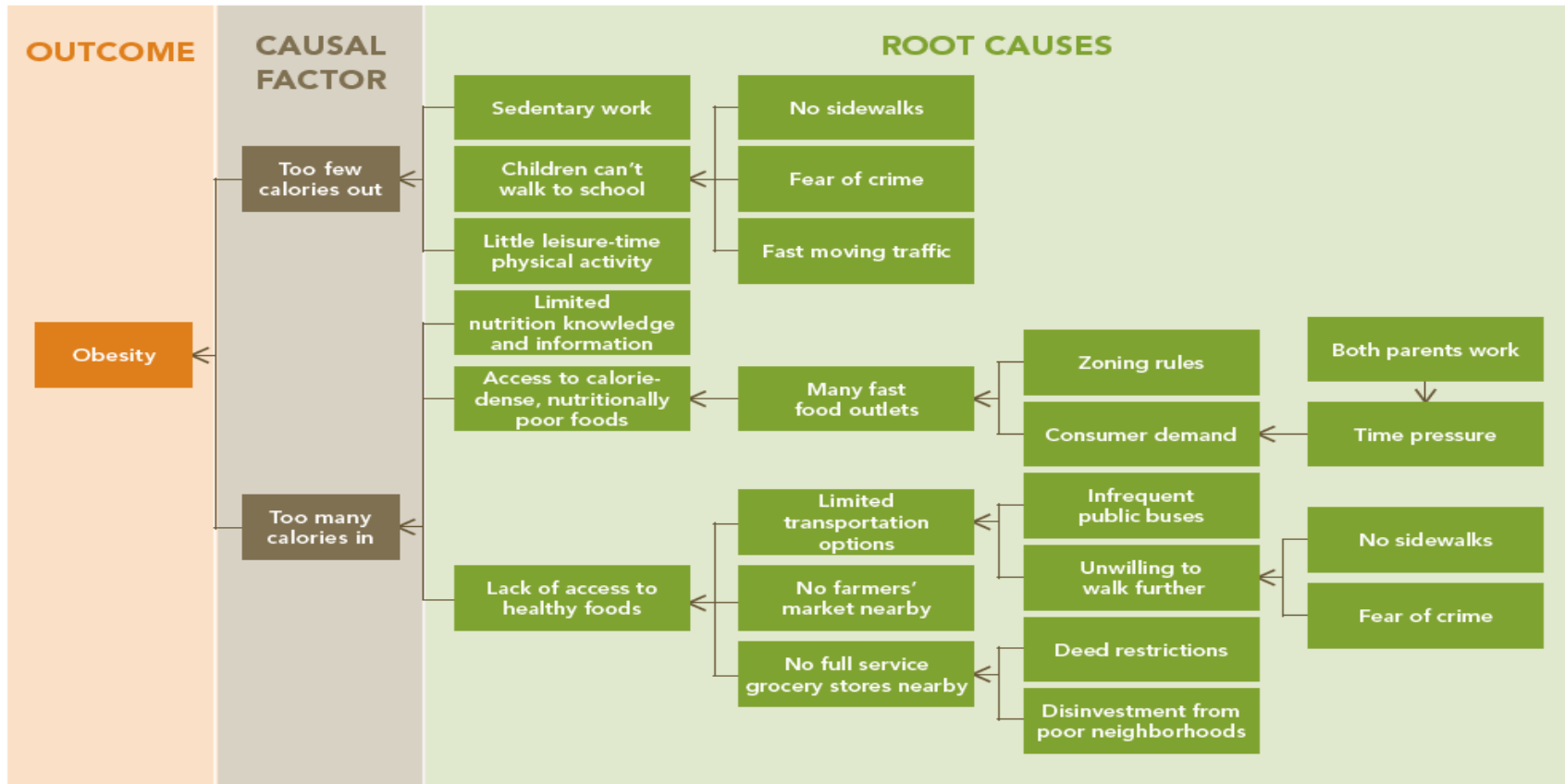
Tools for understanding health inequities

- *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*
- *Race: The Power of An Illusion*
- NACCHO Roots of Health Inequity
- www.RacialEquityTools.org
- Harvard University: [Project Implicit](#)
- APHA Racism and Health [webinars](#)
- Interaction Institute for Social Change [webinars](#) on equity and urban planning



Tools for understanding health inequities: Root Cause Mapping

FIGURE 8. ROOT CAUSE MAP



Source: *Health in All Policies: A Guide for State and Local Governments*

Organizational Barriers: Staff Skills

Cultural Competence

- A continual learning process
- Focuses on three dimensions:
 - Awareness
 - Beliefs
 - Behaviors



Organizational Barriers: Staff Skills

Cultural Competence: Awareness

Ability to recognize and understand the reasons for the actions of individuals from one's own and others' cultures.

- Self
- Others cultural beliefs and behaviors
- Environment, social and economic factors
- Power relationships
- Individual differences



Organizational Barriers: Staff Skills

Cultural Competence: Beliefs

Judgments about the world that shape how individuals determine what information is valid and what sources are reliable.

- Valuing difference
- Suspending judgment
- Individuals act according to their own beliefs



Organizational Barriers: Staff Capacity & Skills

Cultural Competence: Behaviors

Actions that flow from awareness and beliefs.

- Effective communication across cultures
- Seeking diversity in problem-solving
- Promote cultural competency in others



Organizational Barriers: Staff Skills

Strategies for Building Cultural Competence

- Dedicate resources for training
- Attend community meetings and cultural events as a participant
- Engage community-based organizations and other groups representative of the community
- Translate materials and provide interpreters at community meetings



Understand the history of the community

History of the community

- Historical injustices
 - Exclusionary policies and practices
 - Historical trauma
- Current climate
 - Community relations
 - Community – government relations
 - Gentrification

History of the community

- Past community engagement efforts
 - What has worked?
 - What hasn't worked?
- Your organization's engagement in the community
 - How is your organization perceived?
 - How are your partners perceived?



Build relationships early and consistently



Build relationships

- Authenticity takes time
- Consistency is key
- Involve community as early as possible
- Leverage partners with strong community relations



Select appropriate engagement techniques

Engagement Techniques

- ▶ Advisory Boards & Committees
- ▶ Health Impact Assessments
- ▶ Informal Open Houses/Exhibits
- ▶ Community Inventory
- ▶ Listening Circles
- ▶ Community Theatre & Arts
- ▶ Media Strategies
- ▶ Cultural Complementarity
- ▶ Public Meetings & Forums
- ▶ Cultural Competency Training
- ▶ Public Opinion Polling
- ▶ Decision-Making
- ▶ Storytelling
- ▶ Dialogue
- ▶ Study Circles
- ▶ Diversity Forums
- ▶ Surveys & Field Canvassing
- ▶ Focus Groups
- ▶ Visioning

Source: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/>



Engagement Techniques: Technology

- How familiar is your audience with technology in general?
- Is the tool easy to use and intuitive?
- Is the technology transparent?
- Accessible to non-English speaking or low literacy community members
- Can communities use it use repeatedly?
- Could the use of the technology further alienate or intimidate users?



Engagement Techniques

| Timing | Goals | Technique/tool |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Early (pre-plan) | Idea gathering Problem identification Community priorities | One-on-one contact “Working” meetings Root cause mapping Health impact assessment Community health needs assessment Focus group Use existing organizations: clubs, civic groups, etc. Telephone surveys Written surveys |
| Far along (plan developed) | Revise plans Build consent | One-on-one contact “Working” meetings Advisory group Audience response technology (keypads) forum |

Adapted from Getting started on citizen and stakeholder participation. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/needs/stakeholder.pdf>



Understand and address barriers to participation

Common Barriers to Participation

- Time and location
- Language
- Family demands
- Unclear of value/purpose



Address Common Barriers

- Have clear purpose for engagement
- Conduct meetings in native languages
- Provide interpretation
- Provide transportation, meals, childcare

Support and build community capacity

Building Community Capacity

Why?

- Illustrates value
- Demonstrates investment
- Promotes sustainability



Building Community Capacity

How?

- Include community members in coalitions; invite/bring to table
- Resources for trainings, education
 - Equity, diversity and inclusion
 - Leadership development
 - Coaching on public testimony
- Ensure trainers/facilitators with equity perspective



Value community and technical expertise

Value community and technical expertise

- Involve at all levels of project development and implementation
- Allow community members to:
 - Define agenda
 - Organize and lead convenings/meetings
 - Invite unrepresented parties to the table
- Tap community and technical intelligence to develop common language

Time NOT on your side?

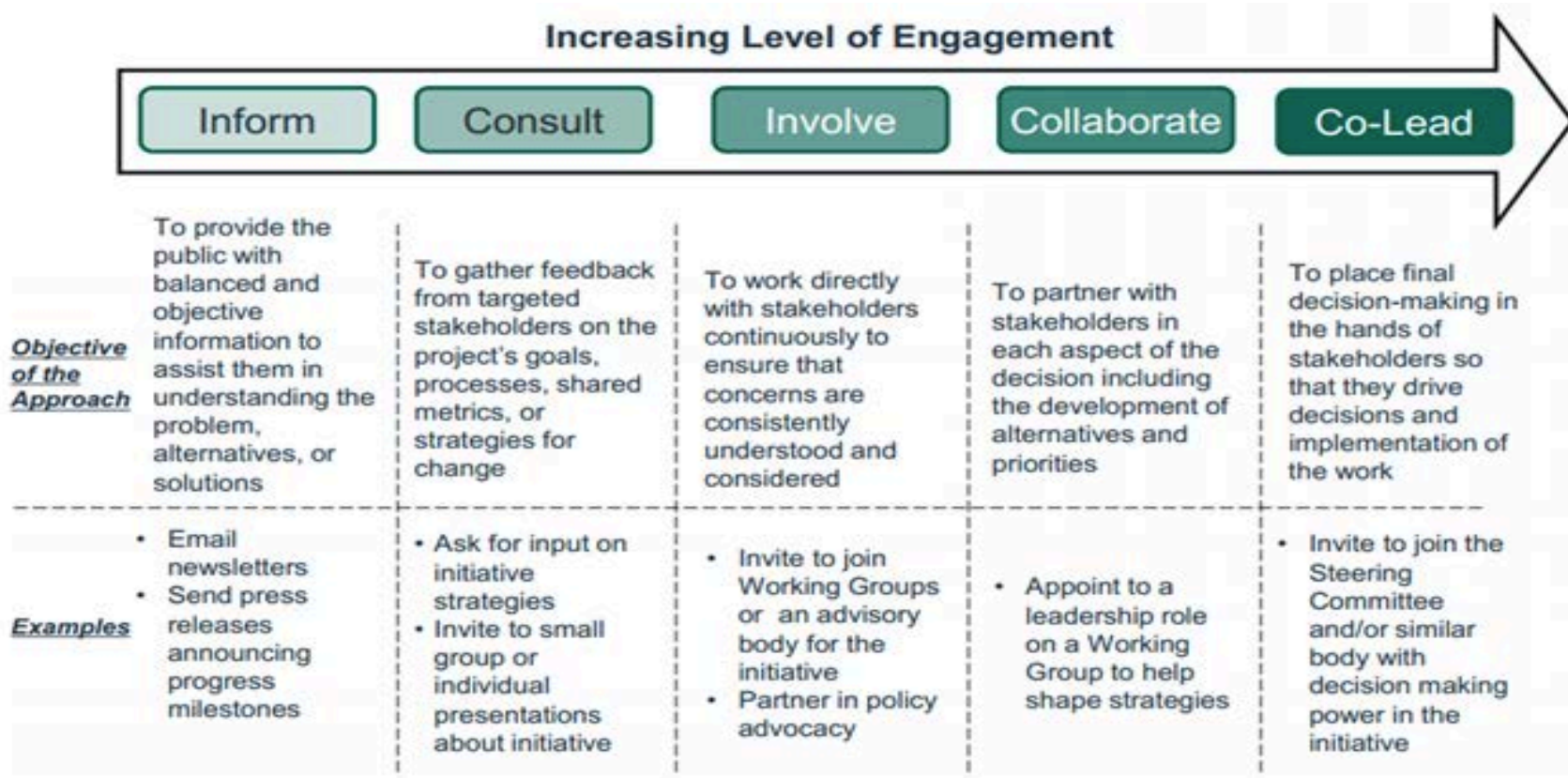


Time NOT on your side?

- Examine your coalition
 - Does it include organizations representing low income and communities of color?
 - Is there racial and ethnic diversity?
 - Who is missing from the table?
 - Which partners have the most meaningful community relationships?



Determine level of engagement



Source: Collective Impact Forum, adapted from Tamarack Institute and IAP2

<https://www.livingcities.org/blog/812-working-with-communities-to-advance-racial-equity-and-eliminate-disparities>

Lay solid ground work for future efforts

- Be transparent with community
- Continue to build organizational/coalition capacity for equity work
- Maintain involvement with community orgs and residents
- Involve community in generating ideas for future work

Assessing community engagement efforts

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: Community Engagement

1. Where are we now?

- What existing relationships do we have with populations experiencing health inequities?
- What is our current process/plan for engaging community members, particularly those experiencing health inequities?
- Are we using language that facilitates or creates barriers to engaging the intended communities?

2. What approaches can we use to effectively engage community members?

- What type of engagement techniques do we typically use? Have they had the effect we intended?
- Are we using techniques that build community capacity and leadership? If not, what techniques could be pursued?

3. What barriers to community engagement should we consider?

- What is our organization's history with the community?
- What organizational barriers exist for meaningful community engagement activities? How can we overcome these barriers?
- How will we identify barriers to community participation? How can we overcome these barriers?

4. How can we engage and balance both community and technical expertise in our efforts?

- How do we show that we value and recognize the expertise of community members?
- Do any strained relationships exist in the community? Why do they exist?
- How can our engagement process best leverage both community and technical expertise?

5. What are our next steps?

- What can we do differently to improve or enhance our community engagement?
- What is our plan of action to implement those changes?



Source: CDC. [*A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity: Community Strategies for Preventing Chronic Disease*](#) (Page 13)

Thank you!

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Please complete a brief evaluation
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8H5Z2H3>

