Community Science

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY?

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OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
WHAT YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF
WHAT CAN HAPPEN
WHAT CAN YOU DO
WHAT IS COMMUNITY

• Community is both a feeling and a set of relationships among people.

• People form and maintain communities to meet their needs.

• Neighborhoods, schools, college campuses, or places of faith are context and environments for these communities but they are not communities themselves.
THIS MEANS THAT....

- People live in multiple communities
  - People identify and participate in several communities, from neighborhoods to nations, communities of faith to communities of politics, communities of academic disciplines to professions, as well as communities based on race and ethnicity, age, gender, or sexual orientation

- Communities are nested within each other
  - Communities are often found within communities, for example:
    - In a neighborhood — a community in and of itself — there may be communities based on persons of different racial background, ages and needs
    - In an academic institution — also a community in and of itself — there may be communities based on academic disciplines, persons of different racial background, and job functions
THIS MEANS THAT....

- Communities have formal and informal institutions
  - Formal institutions
    - In a place-based community, formal institutions include schools, local government, places of worship, and health care organizations
    - In an academic setting, formal institutions include deans’ offices, student union, office of admissions, community engagement office
  - Informal institutions
    - Social or cultural networks of helpers and leaders

- Communities are organized in different ways
  - Every community is organized to meet its members’ needs – but they may not look the way we traditionally think of them. Communities operate differently based on the cultures, religions, and other experiences of their members.
TO FIND COMMUNITY, LOOK FOR:

- Where people naturally gather to address their needs or share their interests (e.g., parks, public or campus library, cultural and other festivals)

- Who people listen to and trust (e.g., spiritual leaders, an “elder,” neighborhood association president, fraternity or sorority leader, counselor, professor)

- Which formal institutions address people’s needs and interests (e.g., schools, health centers, chamber of commerce)
WHERE TO START

- Understand the demographic groups in the surrounding areas and start with the formal institutions you know that serve them.

- Pick up and review local newsletters or newspapers distributed by clubs on campus, neighborhood associations, and other organizations.

- Reach out to faith and spiritual leaders.

- Reach out to student groups, professional associations, labor unions, community-based participatory researchers at your institution.

- Go to places where people naturally gather (e.g., parks, soccer fields, campus cafeteria).

- Set up an information booth at local YMCAs.
USE SNOWBALL SAMPLING APPROACH

Ask every person or group you speak to who or where they go to when they need help about something that concerns them.
## WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

### IAP2’S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public’s role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INFORM</th>
<th>CONSULT</th>
<th>INVOLVE</th>
<th>COLLABORATE</th>
<th>EMPOWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Participation Goal</td>
<td>To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.</td>
<td>To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.</td>
<td>To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.</td>
<td>To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.</td>
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**Promise to the Public**

- **Inform**: We will keep you informed.
- **Consult**: We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.
- **Involve**: We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- **Collaborate**: We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
- **Empower**: We will implement what you decide.
1. Perception of you, who you represent, and your institution
2. Historically excluded groups or groups that have been harmed by research institutions have led to distrust
3. Diverse channels of information dissemination and unequal access
4. Words have different meanings based on history and context
5. Familiarity, comfort, and confidence with input/feedback processes vary depending on history, culture, context, and power differences
6. Ability to be involved varies depending on economic situation, availability of time, and role
7. Ability to collaborate varies depending on knowledge, skills, resources, and past and current relationships with you, your institution, and other groups
8. Systemic barriers may continue to keep some groups from being empowered
WHAT CAN HAPPEN?

- Very few people respond to your request or show up at your community engagement event.
- People show up and are very critical of your institution.
- Some people don’t say anything or say very little.
- You don’t get any substantive feedback verbally or in writing.
- You end up with the same old suspects and miss certain groups of people.
- There is tension, disagreement, and conflict among some of the stakeholders in the room during your community engagement event.
- The leader of a particular stakeholder group calls you and is upset that you didn’t reach out to his/her group, or that you prioritized another group’s input over his/her group.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are engaging the community verbally or through in-person interactions:

- Consider all the possible ways and venues where there are “communities.”
- Don’t try and engage the community all by yourself; identify and work with bridge builders and cultural brokers.
- Use plain language and don’t assume that a particular term or concept means the same thing for everyone.
- Be prepared for any criticism of your institution, acknowledge the power of your institution, and then move on and focus on the task at hand.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are engaging the community verbally or through in-person interactions:

- Be mindful of people’s perceptions of you and of each other, due to possible implicit biases and other assumptions about racial/ethnic, age, gender, and other differences.

- Engage a trained or professional facilitator; consider the professionals in your academic institution who already teach and practice group facilitation.

- Be honest about what you will do with the information or feedback, don’t try and placate any stakeholder group.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you are engaging the community through written communications:

- Consider all the possible venues where there are “communities,” and distribute the written communications through these venues.
- Don’t try and engage the community all by yourself; identify and work with bridge builders and cultural brokers.
- Use plain language and don’t assume that a particular term or concept means the same thing for everyone.
- Consider how certain terms or concepts can diminish or perpetuate existing prejudices.
- Use professional translators if needed.
- Be honest about what you will do with the information or feedback, don’t try and placate any stakeholder group.