

SIX ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES

BEYOND MEETINGS AND SURVEYS

Effective community engagement takes careful planning and acknowledgement that each population that we work with is a unique opportunity to broaden our understanding of what makes a community.

To help you think about ways to use each strategy, we have provided critical questions to consider, as well as successful examples to illustrate creative ways to connect with your target group.

I. Build personal relationships with target population

Q1 Are there key individuals or constituents you already have or should be building a relationship with?

Q2 Are there venues for you to attend or explore to find out who are natural community leaders?

- Informal/Community driven gatherings that are appropriate to attend
- Connect with the individuals in this community/population

2. Create a welcome atmosphere

Q1 Does your process reflect, honor, and welcome the community?

Q2 Do the venues you choose invite participation and engagement?

- Hire staff or consultants from the community or that reflect the target population
- Choose gathering places that are comfortable and that are conducive to the interactions that you want to have

3. Increase accessibility

Q1 Are there issues/barriers (language, location, time, transportation, childcare, food, incentives, appeal, power dynamics, etc.) that should be considered throughout the whole process?

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Q2 Are there ways to increase the level of input a community has in a process?

- Selecting the most appropriate and effective communication method to promote engagement opportunities
- Decrease barriers to attendance or effective communication at events

4. Develop alternative methods for engagement

Q1 Do you have non-traditional methods of outreach to get people involved?

Q2 Do you offer multiple ways for contributing input and feedback?

- Provide opportunities for social interaction and relationship building
- Provide opportunities for community members to give feedback in photographic, voice recorded, or video formats

5. Maintain a presence within the community

Q1 Are there community driven events that you can participate in and that people will already be gathering for?

Q2 Do community members see you out, regularly, in the community?

- Attend community driven events and activities (think non-traditional)
- Establish places in the community that people can have sustained, informal interactions with you

6. Partner with diverse organizations and agencies

Q1 Are there organizations that currently have relationships with your target populations that you can connect with (remember to consider power dynamics)?

Q2 Have any agencies or organizations successfully implemented similar programs or initiatives (perhaps on a smaller scale or in another community) that you can solicit advice from?

- Connect with organizations who are already culturally tied to the target community or are currently providing services to your target population
- Create a network of services that eliminate gaps or reduce redundancies for the target population