Introduction to Community Engagement

Outcomes

1. Increased awareness of community engagement theory, practice, tools and resources.
2. Increased awareness of strategies for engaging partners, specific populations and entire communities.
3. Opportunities for participants to share successes, challenges and resources.

Poll results

• In what context do you do most of your work? (rural, small town, urban etc.)

Defining “community” and “engagement”

A community can be …

• Place (neighbourhood, town…)
• Shared interest (sports, dance, art …)
• Shared religion, ethnicity or other bond
• Shared circumstances (single mothers…)
• Virtual or learning communities

Community engagement is …

… people and organizations working together - through inspired action and learning - to create and realize a bold vision for their common future.

Adapted from the Tamarack Institute
Community engagement is …
…a continuum from informing and consulting, to collaborating and empowering.

…a process that forges relationships, creates shared understanding, builds trust and shares leadership with the broader community.

Community engagement...
… challenges us to “see” people and communities in new ways - through fresh eyes.

Principle #1: Asset-based
“Needs” vs “Assets”

People and communities have deficiencies & needs

Individuals and communities have skills and talents

NEEDS vs ASSETS

- focuses on deficiencies; on what’s “wrong” or “bad”
- focuses on strengths, on what’s good, what’s already “working”
- results in fragmented responses to local needs
- builds interdependencies
- views people as consumers of services, creates dependence
- finds ways for people to share their talents and “gifts”
- residents have little say in local decisions
- empowers people and gives them a voice

Principle #2: Inclusive

- Welcoming to all members of the community
- Ask “who is not here?” rather than “who is here?”
Principle #3: Transparent

- The aims of community engagement processes, services, and programs are clear to all participants.
- Everyone is clear about who they are, what they are doing there, and what can and cannot be expected of them.

Principle #4: Responsive

Every community engagement process is different because each responds to local conditions.
The sequence of events and activities will vary from one situation to another.

Who Will You Engage?

- Partners (existing and new)
- Specific populations (e.g. youth, ethno-cultural)
- Entire communities (comprehensive community initiatives)

Four Types of Community Engagement

- Informing
- Consulting
  - Collaborating
  - Empowering

Informing - What is it?

- Providing balanced and objective information
- Keeping people informed
  - Public notices, written information
  - Websites, Facebook, Twitter etc
  - Open houses etc
**Informing - Innovation**

- Innovation is required, especially to reach out to marginalized groups:
  - Door to door contact
  - Peer leaders and “champions”
  - Social marketing
    - (e.g. blue boxes, “we compost too”)

**Consulting - What is it?**

- Public input into priorities, decisions, plans or policies
- Seeking and providing feedback (two-way)
  - Visioning sessions
  - Key informant interviews
  - Focus groups, open houses
  - Questionnaires, asset/need assessments

**Clearly state your intentions**

- Make sure your intentions are clear to yourself and others
- Ask yourself why you are consulting the community:
  - For input on a policy or course of action?
  - To improve programs or services?
  - To justify or confirm something you have already planned?

**Level of Public Input**

- Where should we go on vacation this year? 
  vs.

- We’re going to the beach. Do you want to join us?

**Presenting Options**

- If you are only considering one way of doing something, why are you consulting?
- If there is more than one way, present the options along with their strengths and weaknesses.
Meaningful consultation requires…

• Knowing thyself – clarifying your own goals
• Discovering & understanding community interests
• Presenting options fairly
• Being honest about the level of input being sought
• Allowing enough time to consult & share results

Collaborating - What is it?

• A group of people working together to reach a common goal.
• Coming together of two or more organizations to solve complex problems.

“The key to making a good movie is getting everyone making the same movie”

Francis Ford Coppola

Collaborating

Range from informal to formal

• Information sharing
• Joint programs and services
• Formal mergers

Along the continuum from informal to formal…

• Increased level of integration
• Increased level of shared risks and rewards

Successful Collaboration

• Successful collaboration requires…
  – Mutual understanding, trust and respect
  – a clear and transparent process
  – shared goals and terms of reference
  – champions
  – skilled facilitators and chair persons
Shifting from Organizational to Collaborative Leadership

Organizational
- Hierarchical
- Taking Control
- Having the Answers
- Leaders & Followers
- Responsibility for tasks and activities

Community
- Collaborative
- Acting as a Catalyst
- Asking the Right Questions
- Shared Leadership
- Responsibility for community outcomes

Shared Decision-making
Moving from centralized to shared decision-making

Empowerment - What is it?
An intentional ongoing process…
- centred in the local community…
- involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation…
- through which people gain greater control over the decisions and actions affecting their health.

You Can’t Empower People…
...(but you can help create the conditions in which they can empower themselves)

Principles
- Community issue identification
- Community control
- Community expertise
- Financial and other resources provided by government/charitable organizations

Tools for Empowerment

Advocacy: action to gain political commitment, policy support, social acceptance and systems support for a particular goal, program or group

Capacity-building: activities, resources and supports that strengthen the skills and abilities of people and community groups to assume leadership and take effective action in the development of their communities

Policy Development: guidelines, procedures and regulatory measures at the organizational, municipal, provincial and federal level
Questions?

WHO IS THE TASK FORCE?
A group of over 80 citizens and City staff seeking to improve community engagement with municipal government:

...inclusive and diverse, reflecting a broad range of Londoners across geography, age, race, gender, profession, interest and perspective.

WHY IS A POLICY NEEDED?
• Citizen engagement values the right of citizens to have an informed say in the decision that affect their lives.
• A policy explicitly acknowledges that decisions are improved through citizen engagement and demonstrates our commitment to engagement across the full spectrum of City activities.

BEST PRACTICES
Cities across Canada are working to improve how they engage the public. Best practices in public engagement policies or strategies include:

• A definition of engagement
• A set of principles to guide engagement efforts
• A description of the different ways of engaging
• Online calendar of events, meetings, and opportunities for input
• Tools and training for staff who carry out engagement efforts

HOW DO WE DEFINE “COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT”? 
Community engagement is the process of meaningful dialogue and participation in forming decisions that affect the community and enhance quality of life. The community engagement process is transparent, responsive, inclusive, and empowering, and is based in realistic expectations, mutual respect, and trust.
Community Engagement Framework: Options for Reaching & Involving Londoners

- Inform: To provide detailed information and awareness to the public
- Consult: To obtain feedback on initiatives, options, or processes in order to inform decision-making
- Collaborate: To partner with stakeholders at all steps of the process, including planning, implementation, and evaluation of recommendations and their impact on stakeholders
- Citizen Leadership: To empower citizens to initiate and make final decisions

Key Success Factors
- Mutual Respect and Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Shared Responsibility
- Transparency
- Realistic Expectations
- Responsiveness

Summary
- Engagement spans the distance from simply providing information to complex multi-organizational initiatives
- Every engagement activity is unique in its context, participants, and goals
- One size doesn’t fit every community. Your role is to adapt the process to the particular context of the engagement.

Community Engagement Tools & Resources

HC Link
- www.hclinkontario.ca
  • Engaging francophone populations
  • Engaging marginalized populations
  • At a Glance: Community Engagement

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC) www.ohcc-ccso.ca
  • Inclusive Community Organizations: A Toolkit

Health Nexus www.healthnexus.ca
  • Connecting the Dots: Handbook on Community Engagement
Community Engagement Websites

- Tamarack Institute on Community Engagement
  www.tamarack.ca

- EPIC Ontario - Engaging People in Care
  http://epicontario.ca/Home.aspx

- The Community Toolbox - (University of Kansas)
  http://ctb.ku.edu/en

Tools for Dialogue

- C2D2- Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation
  www.c2d2.ca

- Appreciative Inquiry (the A-1 Commons)
  http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/

- Open Space
  www.openspaceworld.org/

- Facilitator’s Guide to Participatory Decision-Making
  (www.communityatwork.com)

Questions?