

Community Engagement Process Toolkit



What Is It?

A set of best practices that organizations can use to ensure that the lived experiences and voices of the community are centered in any major decisionmaking that would impact them.



How was It Created?

This tool was created by utilizing United Way for Southeastern Michigan's Centering Community Voice Blueprint and current research to compile a process and plan for organizations to authentically engage the community to identify local inequities and share power in developing strategies to address those inequities.



Who Should Use It?

Any organization or individual that seeks to authentically engage community!



Check out and click on the embedded

 Tools

to explore more resources!

**United
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for Southeastern Michigan**

Community Engagement Toolkit

0. The "Why"

Centering lived experience in the community engagement process:

- ensures that communities have agency and voice in the decisionmaking process.
- disrupts systems of oppression and practices that contribute to the inequities that can be caused by community engagement practitioners



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Step 0. The “Why” Behind Lived Experience

Background: Lived Experience

- Lived experience describes the expertise that comes from a person's past or present experiences
- Community members are the best-equipped to understand the unique strengths and needs of their communities
- Incorporating lived experience into every step of community engagement ensures that community needs are met, resources are appropriate, and processes are equitable

Guiding Principles for Centering Lived Experience

- Be open, transparent, and responsive when engaging with the community
- Solicit and act on feedback from those with lived experience
- Highlight the strengths of the community rather than its needs to unlock its full potential
- Be aware of your biases and establish internal practices to prevent unconscious bias from shaping your work
- Be genuinely inclusive by addressing concerns and cultivating a sense of belonging

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Step 1. Self-Evaluation: How Might Organizational Practices Hinder Equity?

Before You Begin	<p>Prior to engaging with the community, evaluate how your internal practices and operations embrace lived experience, honor equity, and powershare with the community.</p> <p>Incorporating lived experience is a continuous process that should be embedded at all points of the community engagement process.</p>	Evaluate & Modify	<p>Hiring & staff policies</p> <p>Organizational structure</p> <p>Board & staff member composition</p> <p>Amount & extent of transparency</p> <p>How processes reflect values</p>
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Centering Lived Experience Assessment

Scoring Descriptions	
0	not achieved, no activity/involvement
1	minimal achievement or involvement
2	making progress, noteworthy achievement or involvement
3	fully achieved or integrated

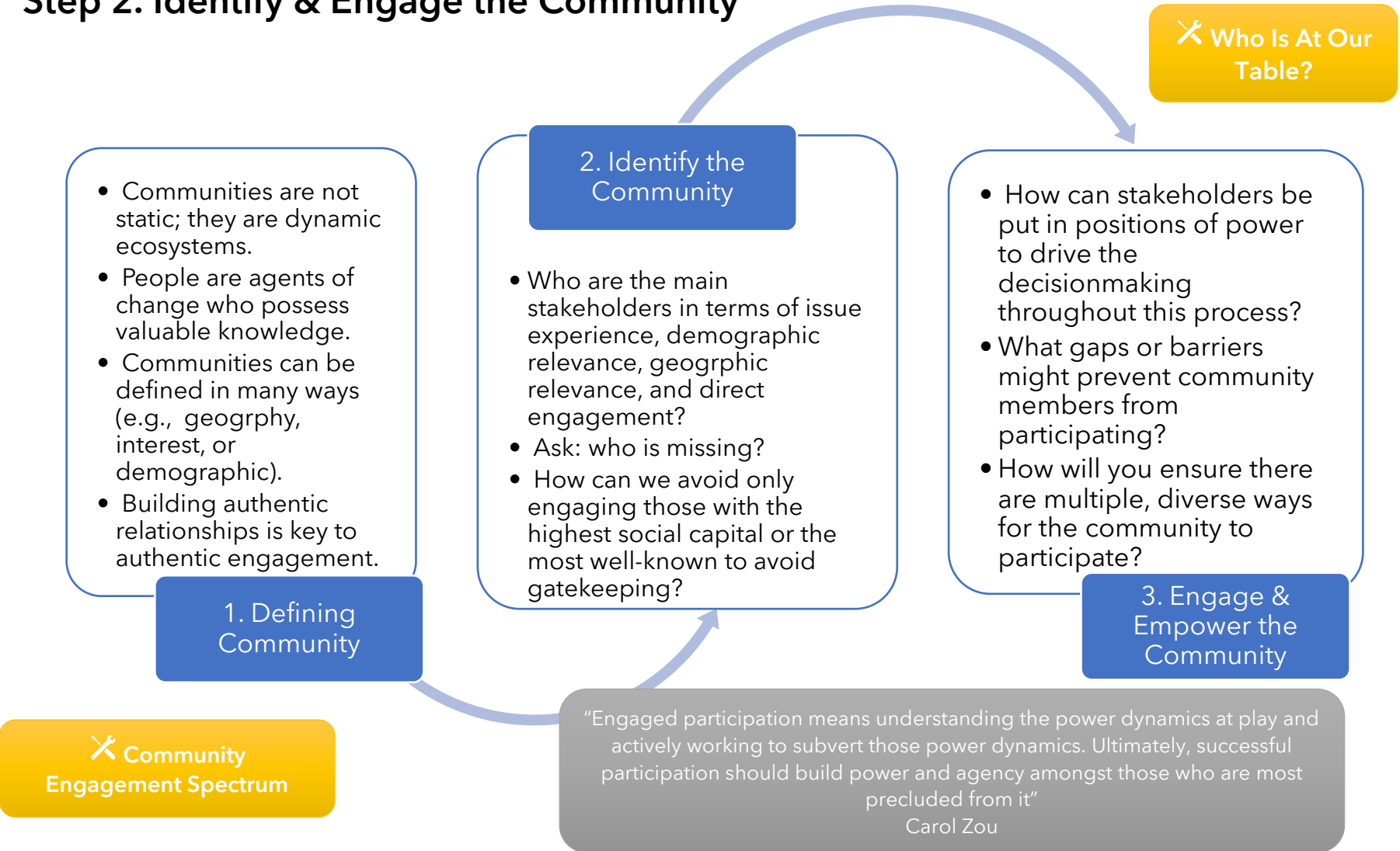
Using the Assessment:

1. Evaluate your organization’s practices using each indicator.
2. For items with a score of 0-1: What would it look like or feel like to be at 2-3? What action steps can be taken?
3. For items with a score of 2-3: What evidence do you have for this indicator?

Indicator	Score
The board and organizational leadership value lived experience and believe that incorporating lived experience in the community engagement process is a valuable priority	
The strategic priorities of the organization, the mission statement, and the organizational values reflect a commitment to centering lived experience	
People with lived experience serve on the organization’s board	
People with lived experience make recommendations to the board and inform board decisions	
The organization incorporates lived experience as part of performance measures within the organization	
The organization hires people with lived experience on staff	

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Step 2. Identify & Engage the Community



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Step 3. Co-Learning: Identifying Possibilities for Impact & Change

Principles

- Create a shared language that is accessible to all stakeholders.
- Foster mutual learning among the organization and stakeholders.
- Provide multiple methods for engagement.

Strategies

- Neighborhood visits
- Listening sessions
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Board public comment
- Resident-led engagement opportunities
- Townhalls

Asset Mapping

- Assets are anything in a community that can be utilized to improve quality of life.
- What are the human, organizational, economic, and physical assets of the community?
- Mapping assets enables communities to identify where assets are clustered and where there may be gaps.

Assessing Needs

- Are there areas in which certain assets are lacking?
- What needs are not being met that are important to stakeholders?
- What inequities exist? What is the source of these inequities?

 **Changing the Discourse**

Collectively Defining the Opportunity

- Based on the assets and needs of the community, what opportunities for addressing inequity exist?
- What are the community's priorities?
- Develop a vision to bring to life through collective work.
- What is the vision for change?
- What are the intended short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes?

Solicit Feedback

- Record all input from stakeholders
- Identify and summarize big ideas to present back to the stakeholders
- Confirm or modify using feedback from stakeholders

 **Asset Mapping Tool**

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Step 4. Co-Design: Developing a Plan for Sustainable Impact

Essential Question: How can we collectively actualize the opportunity?

Power Mapping

- **What is it?** A diagram of the people who have the ability to make something happen, prevent it, or cause it to have a certain outcome. Power mapping captures the type and extent of power between people and agencies.
- **Reflect:** How can stakeholders increase their influence? How might this project disrupt power dynamics.
- **Utilize** the Power Map to develop effective strategies for making change.

✂ Power Matrix

Establish Roles & Develop Strategy

- Seat community members and stakeholders in key positions of power for project planning & implementation.
- What organizations, individuals, and networks are already doing work related to the opportunity? How can you partner with them?
- What resources do you need?
- What technical assistance and training could be provided to ensure effectiveness?

Create a Timeline of Action Steps

- Creating a timeline can illustrate the project duration, show progress, and keep community members informed.
- Rushing to achieve results can perpetuate inequity. Developing a process and flexible timeline can ensure that the work reflects community priorities.
- Avoid prioritizing the delivery of a product in a specific timeframe over authentic engagement.

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Step 5. Implementation

Develop Impact Metrics

- What qualitative and quantitative metrics will be used to measure the impact of the project?
 - Program outputs
 - Participation rates
 - Levels of satisfaction
 - Changes in behavior
 - System change
 - Improvements in community-level indicators.
- What methods can capture the necessary data?
 - Surveys about satisfaction
 - Goal attainment reports
 - Interviews with participants
 - Self-reporting, logs
 - Observations
- When will data be collected and who will be collecting it?
- How will the data be used?
- What supports can be integrated to build data literacy?

Anticipate Potential Barriers

- Strict parameters can limit opportunities to challenge power dynamics and create equitable outcomes. Is the community engagement process flexible and adaptable based on community needs?
- How can the time and location, language proficiency, accessibility of engagement opportunities be responsive to stakeholders?
- How can conflicting opinions between groups in a community be resolved?

Create Accountability Measures

- How will the community hold organizations accountable?
- What measures will prevent powerful stakeholders from acting as gatekeepers?
- How does the strategy, plan, and timeline enable stakeholders to voice concerns throughout the process?
- How will you gather and document feedback from stakeholders? What process could ensure feedback is acted upon?

 Racial Equity in Data Integration Toolkit

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Step 6. Evaluate Impact



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