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Community Engagement

A Foundational Practice for Community Change

Goals for this session:

1. Learn the basics of designing a community engagement approach
2. Think creatively about how these can be adapted for your congregation's context
3. Pick one area for application

What is Community Engagement?

“Citizens engaged in inspired action as they work & learn together on behalf of their communities to create & visualize bold visions for the future” ¹

- Sylvia Chuey, The Tamarack Institute

Key Terms

► Content Experts:

- Professionals, staff in the organization, service providers, leaders with formal power who have knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue. ²

► Context Experts (aka people with lived experience):

- People with lived experience of the situation, including children and youth. They are the people who experientially know about the issue. ²

Ownership and shaping solutions

- ▶ **Buy-in:** someone else has developed the idea, made the decision, designed an action plan, and then asks and needs the staff/citizens to approve it and/or implement it.

VS.

- ▶ **Ownership:** Front line staff/citizens develop the idea, make the decisions, design the action plan, and act on it.

Also...

- ▶ Honor & recognize the time and talent of context experts
- ▶ Remove barriers to participation
 - ▶ Can be physical, structural, procedural, or emotional
 - ▶ Think about meeting days/times, accessibility, language used, flexibility, prioritizing relationship building, and power dynamics
- ▶ Allow for emergence
- ▶ Transformational, rather than transactional, experiences
 - ▶ Context experts are not just a source of information - they're partners with a stake in the work!
 - ▶ “Doing with” instead of “Doing for”
 - ▶ Create change through knowing each other

“

Authentic community change
moves at the speed of trust.

”

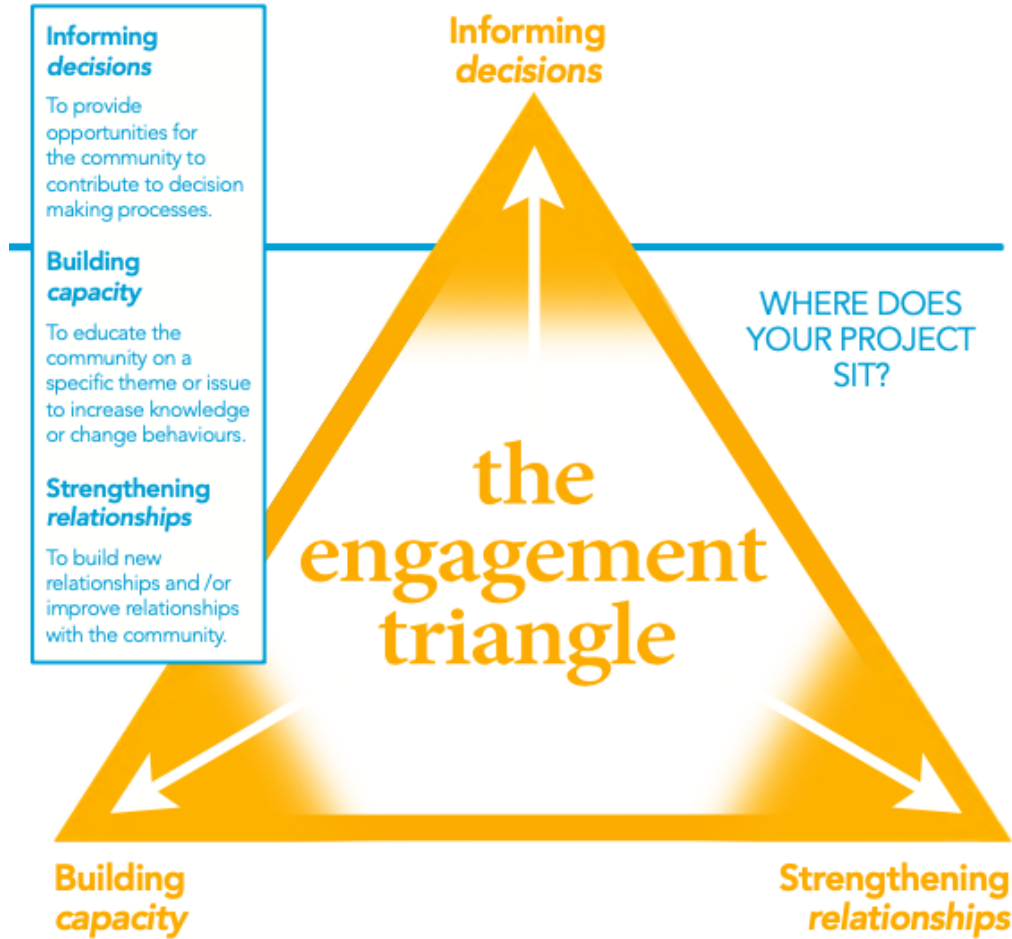
Liz Weaver, Tamarack Institute

Process design

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Purpose

- ▶ What is the purpose/intent of your community engagement?
 - ▶ Inform decisions?
 - ▶ Build capacity?
 - ▶ Strengthen relationships?
 - ▶ Achieving transparent governance?



Principles

- ▶ What are your principles for engaging with community?
- ▶ Principles help us to:
 - ▶ Set a vision
 - ▶ Align participants
 - ▶ Make our assumptions explicit
 - ▶ Be adaptable to community context and need
 - ▶ Assess our actions ⁵

Principles

► Examples include:

- Trust
- Transparency
- Reciprocation
- Respect
- Education
- Communication
- Inclusivity
- Relationship-driven
- Accountability

How do we hold ourselves, and give the community opportunities to hold us accountable to these principles?

How

- ▶ **How will we engage?**
- ▶ Internal asset map & external asset map
 - ▶ Lean into strengths rather than orienting towards obstacles/areas of lack
 - ▶ What gifts, skills, and knowledge are there?
 - ▶ Who is here? (e.g. individuals, groups, formal or informal associations, local institutions)
- ▶ What are the community's interests and passions?
- ▶ What are the community's needs, goals, and hopes?
- ▶ Has any previous engagement been conducted in this community?
- ▶ What are the community's expectations?
- ▶ Identify challenges and areas to mitigate
- ▶ Where is the lowest hanging fruit?
- ▶ As you build projects or initiatives, look for small ways to pilot and learn

How

- ▶ Role: facilitator vs. expert
- ▶ Make it fun!
- ▶ Care for and about the people who are attending
- ▶ Bring in partners
- ▶ Location - where do people already gather?
- ▶ Validate ideas for engagement with a community representative
- ▶ Build relationship
- ▶ Follow-up - create a regular communication loop

How

- ▶ Examples of engagement techniques ⁴
 - ▶ One-to-one: interviews, surveys, briefings
 - ▶ Small group: meeting, focus group, walking tour, consultative group, kitchen table discussion
 - ▶ Large group: workshop, field trip, deliberative forum, block party
 - ▶ Drop-in: pop-up, listening post, information session
 - ▶ Written: self-completion survey, formal submission, ballot
 - ▶ Online: Forums, website, film, mapping, photo sharing, social network (e.g. Facebook), blog, online survey
 - ▶ Communication & Correspondence: Display, Newsletter/fact sheet, poster, postcard, media release, letters, email

Who

- ▶ **Who will we engage?**
- ▶ Who wants to be involved?
- ▶ Who is already engaged about this issue?
- ▶ Who has unique skills or insights to offer to the engagement that cannot be gathered in any other way?
- ▶ Who is most likely to act as a “spoiler” if they are not involved in this initiative?
- ▶ Whose voice is needed to balance competing or contrary voices?
- ▶ Who will be committed to following the process, including attending meetings and other logistical needs?
- ▶ Who do you know that spans boundaries and can bring people together?

Evaluation, Learning, and Feedback

- ▶ What does our continuous learning process look like?
- ▶ How will we evaluate our engagement?
 - ▶ What was our goal?
 - ▶ What went well? What didn't? Why? What did it bring up for us?
 - ▶ What should we continue?
 - ▶ What can we do differently?
- ▶ How do we keep the community looped in with our learning and development?
 - ▶ Feedback loop with the community - relational vs. transactional, builds trust

References

1. Chuey, Sylvia. Community engagement: a foundational practice of community change. Tamarack Institute, 2018.

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/2018%20CCF%20Paper%20Community%20Engagement%20A%20Foundational%20Practice%20of%20Community%20Change%20Sylvia%20Cheuy.pdf?hsLang=en-us>

2. Attygale, Lisa. The content experts. Tamarack Institute, 2017.

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Publications/The-Context-Experts.pdf?hsLang=en-us>

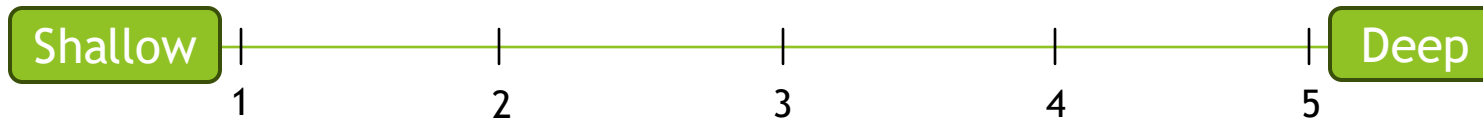
3. Capire Engagement Triangle:

<https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/hubfs/Resources/Tools/Capire%20Triangle%20Booklet.pdf>

Breakouts: Questions for Reflection

Questions to help determine where you're starting from:

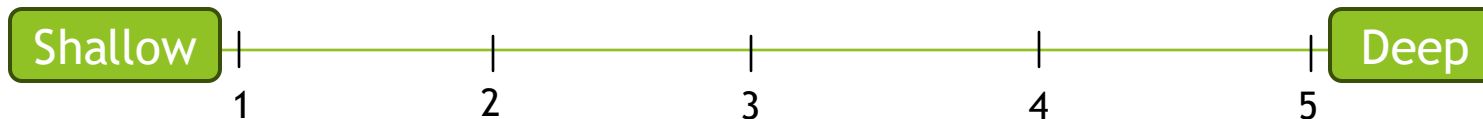
- ▶ What is your **knowledge** level of the unique characteristics of the **place** and **people** you are trying to engage?



- ▶ What is the **community's** level of **trust** with your congregation/church?



- ▶ What is your **church/congregation's** level of **understanding** of the aspirations, challenges, and concerns of people in the community?



Discussion questions:

- ▶ We looked at 5 aspects of community engagement: Principles, Purpose, How, Who, and Evaluation/Learning
 - 1. What stood out to you?
 - 1. How could you translate it to your local community context?
 - 2. What is the low-hanging fruit?
 - ▶ What is one thing you can do to work towards it?



A Few Additional Resources

To get going or dig deeper...

Does your organization face inward or outward? (1)

Questions to ask to promote authentic engagement ⁽³⁾

Developing Principles Together



Guide for designing Community Engagement

- ▶ Creating Community: A Tool for Engagement from Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward
- ▶ 3 challenges to your organization:
 - ▶ Create change through knowing each other - build relationships, be willing to be uncomfortable, value experience, and shift power
 - ▶ Reduce barriers - identify what makes it hard to participate and do your best to remove/address those barriers
 - ▶ Build community - how can your organization foster community?

Capire Engagement Triangle & Engagement Tool



Spectrum of Engagement & Index of Techniques

