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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

We encourage you to share your feedback with us and tell us how you are using the tool or resource. Nexus Community Engagement Institute and our partners intend these documents and tools to introduce practitioners, funders, evaluators, and community members to community engagement and to give the field clarity in its language and principles. However, community engagement is not a field that can rely on written materials alone; it takes a community of practitioners to support one another in practicing community engagement effectively, meeting its challenges, and tapping the strengths within each unique context. We encourage you to seek out experienced practitioners to support you in implementing these tools, principles, and concepts.

Nexus Community Engagement Institute is available for consultation. Please contact us at www.nexuscp.org/ncei or email program director Avi Viswanathan at aviswanathan@nexuscp.org.

Nexus Community Engagement Institute is continuing the work of the Building the Field of Community Engagement (BTF) collaborative. The BTF collaborative was a partnership between Casa de Esperanza, the Cultural Wellness Center, Hope Community, Lyndale Neighborhood Association, the Native American Community Development Institute, and Nexus Community Partners.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

EVERY ORGANIZATION HAS THE CAPACITY TO DO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. Resource limitations can impact the ability to do this work, but commitment and creativity are the only real requirements. We encourage you to use this assessment tool without judgment of yourself or others within your organization. We offer the tool as a guide to help ourselves and our fellow practitioners grow in our understanding of community engagement and to be thoughtful about our own practice of engagement techniques.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS PRACTITIONERS AND ORGANIZATIONS CAN USE THIS TOOL:

- As an individual, to assess your strengths and areas for professional growth
- With the staff in your organization to see where there is agreement, disagreement or tensions about your community engagement efforts.
- With board members to begin or deepen a conversation about community engagement within your organization.
- With new staff or board members to assess what skills they can contribute to your efforts to engage your community.
- To assess where an external partnership could improve community engagement by closing a gap posed by the limitations of your organization.
- To identify where staff or board members require new knowledge or training.
- To glean lessons learned after an event, project or initiative.
- With potential partners (government agencies, nonprofits, community institutions, etc.) to assess whether your approaches are complementary.
- With community members, to assess how they see your work.

SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Under each question on pages 3-5 are a set of continua to rank your work from **"DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH"** through **"DOING CE"**.

2. **Put a check mark in the box** you believe best reflects where you or your organization is currently at.
   You may want to consider 1-2 examples to demonstrate why you selected that box.

3. If you are having trouble deciding which applies, it **may be helpful to consider how you think the community would describe your work**, rather than how you internally describe the work.

4. **Below is a key** to help decipher which column to select in each row.

SELF-ASSESSMENT KEY: "CE" = COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING:** Select this column if you don't know whether you work is outreach, community engagement, or in a stage somewhere in between.

- **DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH:** Select this column if <u>most often</u> you believe your work is mostly outreach rather than mostly community engagement.

- **BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE:** Select this column if you or others in your organization have <u>begun seriously discussing</u> an interest in or commitment to incorporating community engagement practices and principles, <u>but have yet to implement any strategies or policies</u> to do so.

- **WORKING TOWARD CE:** Select this column if you or your organization have <u>begun to implement</u> some community engagement practices, but your organization/team has <u>yet to formally adopt community engagement principles to be at the core</u> and forefront of all the work you do.

- **DOING CE:** Select this column if the <u>vast majority</u> of the time you or your organization are doing community engagement and have <u>formally created systems and practices</u> to continually learn and adapt through community engagement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Q: WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU HAVE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS?

OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• Relationships are primarily **TRANSACTIONAL,** for the purpose of completing a project.						• Relationships are **FOUNDATIONAL,** continually built between and among people and groups. Staff/institutions continually build the relationships they need to know their community.
• Relationships are often **NOT INCLUSIVE** of all racial or cultural groups in the community.						• Relationships reflect the **DIVERSITY** within the community.
• Relationships can be **LIMITED** to a few community members, often giving influence to those with the loudest voices.						• Relationships are built not just with current leaders, but also with people with an interest and/or **POTENTIAL TO BE LEADERS.**
• Relationships are **SHORT-TERM,** so staff have to rebuild them as other projects or issues come up.						• Relationships are transformational and **LONG-TERM,** so community leaders/members can engage in projects and issues as they come up.

Q: WHY ARE YOU ENGAGING PEOPLE?

OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• To accomplish a project or a **SPECIFIC GOAL** defined by the organization.						• To create space for people to **CONNECT, RAISE CONCERNS, BUILD POWER** and **ACT IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS.**
• To **SEEK BUY-IN OR APPROVAL** of something the organization has already planned.						• To **CREATE SPACE** for the community's assets to be recognized and utilized.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Q: HOW ARE YOU GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED? WHEN?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
• Primary activities with community include **FLYERING, SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUPS, WORKSHOPS,** etc.						• Primary activities with community include **LISTENING SESSIONS, ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS, CELEBRATIONS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROJECTS,** etc.
• Information is given or feedback is requested **AFTER A PROJECT IS PLANNED.**						• Planning is done **WITH THE COMMUNITY** from the beginning

Q: HOW DO IDEAS GET GENERATED?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
• **STAFF/ INSTITUTIONS GENERATE IDEAS** they think the community will support.						• Staff/institutions **SUPPORT COMMUNITY MEMBERS** in generating their own ideas.
• Staff/institutions generate **SOLUTIONS TO A PROBLEM** they have defined.						• Staff/institutions engage in **CONTINUAL SELF-REFLECTION** to respond to and incorporate people's ideas, feedback, talents, and challenges into the work.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Q: HOW DO YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND STRUCTURES SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• The organizational culture is primarily focused on OBTAINING SPECIFIC OUTCOMES.						• The organizational culture is focused on learning and it values EMERGENT AND LONG-TERM OUTCOMES.
• Board and staff may NOT REPRESENT the community.						• Board and staff REFLECT the community.
• The organization ADHERES TO WAYS OF OPERATING that reflect the DOMINANT CULTURE, such as using Robert's Rules for meetings, prioritizing staff to speak, etc.						• The organization CREATES SPACE FOR DIFFERENT CULTURAL WAYS, such as offering cultural foods and social spaces/times, giving elders a special role, etc.
• Racism and power may not be discussed or may be DEALT WITH SUPERFICIALLY.						• The organizational culture supports discussions to UNDERSTAND AND DISMANTLE structural racism, to help heal historical trauma and to claim individual and community power.
• The organization adheres to ORGANIZATION-DRIVEN policies and structures.						• The organization demonstrates a willingness to revisit organizational policies and structures to RESPOND TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AND IDEAS.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF OR DISCUSS AS A GROUP AFTER COMPLETING YOUR ASSESSMENT:

- Why did you rank yourself or your organization as you did?
- Where do differences exist between your individual work and the overall work of the organization?
- What would you and/or your organization like to do differently?
- Do your responses align with your organization's mission? What changes could advance your mission?
- Where does the staff or board of the organization agree? Disagree? Where is there tension?
- Where does your organization need additional support?
- Where do you need to build the capacity of your organization?
- What are the opportunities for and challenges to doing community engagement?