

Community Engagement & Participation Checklist **Addressing Disparities for Healthier Places**

Healthy communities are those in which residents have access to social interactions with neighbors, clean safe parks and recreation areas, services such as quality transportation options and local grocery stores with affordable nutritious food, local economic opportunities, and other amenities that promote community and individual wellbeing and prosperity. Engaging community members to have a participatory role in creating healthy environments is a powerful tool for generating sustainable change. This outline is designed to offer an opportunity for reflection on a common process for achieving authentic community engagement and participation. The foundations of participatory community change, which are represented below, are trusting relationships, shared vision, partnerships with public agencies, capacity, and policy action.

How to use this tool:

The items included in this outline are important components of an authentic and participatory community engagement process. This outline should be used to help assess the extent to which you are integrating community input and involvement into your project. Rate each item based on whether or not you included that step in the development and implementation of your initiative.

0 = no/never, 1 = yes, but not recently/need to revisit, 2 = yes/frequently

This tool is not designed to be prescriptive, but to serve as a guide. The exact process may look different depending on the specific policies being addressed and the conditions present in your community.

- I. Build Trusting and Accountable Relationships with Community Leadership and Residents.
 - ___ A. Conduct an environmental scan to identify areas in need of change, community assets, and potential opponents and allies.
 - i. An environmental scan is a strategic planning tool that can be utilized to assess internal and external conditions and data to inform the development of initiatives that are uniquely tailored to the needs of communities.
 - ___ B. Conduct SWOT analysis of each organization and of the coalition as a whole.
 - i. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning process used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats associated with an organization or initiative.
 - ii. To learn more about how to conduct an environmental scan and a SWOT analysis click [here](#).¹
 - ___ C. Identify and invite leaders and organizations in communities of interest facing disparate impacts.
 - i. Consider provisions necessary to allow and encourage people of color and low income people to meaningfully participate (i.e. time of day, location, transportation, child care, food, stipends, etc.)
 - ___ D. Identify community resources and strengths and assets of each person or organization .

- i. Conduct a [community assessment and power analysis](#)² to inform the development of a proactive, community-generated policy initiative.
 - ___ E. Use facilitators skilled in principles of equity.
 - i. Equity is defined as just and fair inclusion. Social and economic equity refers to the creation of conditions that allow all to reach their full potential.
 - ii. Principles of equity include: Leading with equity; building assets in the highest need communities that have suffered long-term disinvestment (both for community and residents); ensuring that community input is informing the development and implementation of initiatives; investing in leadership training for community members; creating pathways to allow people to continue to contribute; etc.
 - ___ F. Structure complementary roles for each organization and resident.
 - ___ G. Develop and allocate resources to ensure sustainability of the coalition and initiative.
- II. Develop shared vision for community change.
 - ___ A. Ensure equity in all processes.
 - i. Focus on who is being left behind with data and needs assessments; continuously evaluate resident impact.
 - ii. Guide research with resident input and highlight the fact that the community is an interconnected web of resources, places, and people.
 - iii. Help major institutions become champions for equity.
 - iv. Work to create a broad cultural shift for how to build a fully inclusive nation where all can participate and prosper.
 - ___ B. Create participatory process for developing vision.
 - ___ C. Create open forums for community members to voice needs and opinions.
 - ___ D. Document community assets to preserve and build from.
 - ___ E. Document disparities and conditions that merit change.
 - ___ F. Engage community members in collecting data and mapping neighborhood characteristics to inform stakeholders of facts and trends.
 - ___ G. Promote Community Based Participatory Research principles.
 - i. CBPR principles include: a high level of mutual respect and trust among partners, appreciation of solid scientific data, commitment to building strong collaborations and alliances with diverse stakeholders, etc.
 - ii. [Case studies](#)³ focusing on community based participatory partnerships throughout the nation that are working to change policy to improve community health, reduce disparities, and foster equity.
 - ___ H. Prioritize goals for community action.
 - i. [Guide](#)⁴ for prioritizing potential policy and systems change strategies.
 - ___ I. Document key decision points and timeline.
 - ___ J. Develop a workplan with defined roles and responsibilities.
- III. Build partnerships with public agencies.
 - ___ A. Create forums to exchange information and learn capacities, responsibilities, and resources of relevant agencies.
 - ___ B. Identify leverage points for community vision to direct agency actions.
 - ___ C. Develop inside and outside strategy.
 - i. A process of exerting influence through a combination of internal influence and external pressures.
- IV. Develop and sustain capacity.
 - ___ A. Plan for organizational and individual development

- ___ B. Seek opportunities for skill building among professional and resident leaders.
 - i. [Information](#)⁵ and a [video](#)⁶ describing the Resident Leadership Academy – one example of an initiative to empower and educate residents to become leaders and change agents in their communities.
 - ___ C. Recruit and energize constituency.
 - i. [Tips](#)⁷ on building a base of people who are engaged in the issue
 - ii. [How to](#)⁸ build diverse community based coalitions
 - ___ D. Amass a knowledge base of relevant information, data, and statistics
 - ___ E. Cultivate relationships with allies
 - ___ F. Develop leadership in every phase
 - ___ G. Seek out new financial and political allies
 - ___ H. Create proactive proposals
 - ___ I. Keep people involved
- V. Translate Community Vision into Policy Change
- ___ A. Develop influence: turn community priorities into policies that will lead to improved health outcomes
 - ___ B. Engage in the legislative process
 - ___ C. Win public appropriations to invest in community vision
 - ___ D. Define, document and celebrate successes
 - i. Don't claim or celebrate success until the neediest residents are on a path to benefiting from the healthy community strategy.

Assessment:

There are 34 items, within five main categories, in the outline. If you add up your rating for each item the highest possible total is 68 points, which would indicate you frequently include each of these steps in the development and implementation of your initiative. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the items in the outline are not weighted or prioritized, and your overall score is less important than your ability to carefully assess your work and understand how to make improvements in the areas where your scores are not as strong. This outline is one tool within a broader resource guide – which includes additional tools and resources as well as case studies. These resources can be accessed on line at:

http://www.policylink.org/site/c.lkIXLbMNJrE/b.5163713/k.93D2/Robert_Wood_Johnson_Foundation_Center_to_Prevent_Childhood_Obesity.htm. For further assistance utilizing this tool or implementing these steps please contact: ehagan@policylink.org

Below is a list of the URLs for the resources that are hyperlinked within this document:

¹ <http://www.oie.eku.edu/docs/2005-06/SWOT%20Analysis.pdf>

² <http://www.scribd.com/doc/44610711/Developing-a-Policy-Initiative>

³ http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97C6D565-BB43-406D-A6D5-ECA3BBF35AF0%7D/CBPR_PromotingHealthyPublicPolicy_final.pdf

⁴ <http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/sites/default/files/FF%20Prioritizing%20Potential%20Strategies.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.sdchip.org/initiatives/resident-leadership-academy.aspx>

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC9XZ2QXmKc>

⁷ http://ccheonline.org/sites/default/files/Tips_on_Base_Building.pdf

⁸ http://ccheonline.org/sites/default/files/Coalition_Building_2.pdf