Principles and Values of Community Engagement

The Hilltop Institute

Mildred Thompson, Director
PolicyLink Center for Health and Place
June 28, 2011

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- **Advocacy/Action**

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Defining Health:
Overall state of physical, economic, social and spiritual well-being

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Why Community Engagement?

- **Value community voice – <u>Democracy</u>**

- **Gain insights in program design and policy priority**

- **Build partnership and support**

- **Translate information back to broader community**

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Principles for Successful Community Engagement

- **Community capacity building:**
  - **Leadership development**
  - **Communication skills**
  - **Community organizing**
  - **Cultural competency and humility**
  - **Policy and Advocacy**
  - **Community-based participatory research**

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Principles for Successful Community Engagement

- **Early outreach and substantive engagement**
- **Seek feedback mechanisms**
- **Create opportunities for success and "win, win"**
- **Translate vision into action**
- **Align organizational mission to community needs**

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Principles for Successful Community Engagement

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- Create unlikely partnerships and collaborations
- Use communication skills to shift public perception
- Address issues of race, culture and class
- Monitor and evaluate impact

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Shared Leadership

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Promising Community Engagement in Action

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- **Health Impact Assessments (HIA)**
- **Community Equity Initiative**
- **Richmond's General Plan**
- **Photo Voice Projects**
- **Community Engagement Resource Guide**

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Thank you!

Mildred Thompson, Director
PolicyLink Center for Health and Place
www.PolicyLink.org

Deputy Director, RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity
http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE

What It Is

This resource guide provides information on engaging local residents and other constituents to play meaningful roles in efforts to build healthy, opportunity-rich communities where children and families thrive. The information includes tools and resources to facilitate community engagement, particularly in underserved urban, rural, and suburban areas, in creating and implementing policies and environmental changes to foster physical activity and healthy eating.

Background

Community engagement is critical to advancing equitable, sustainable solutions to the obesity crisis facing our nation, and low-income children and children of color especially. A leading cause of childhood obesity is poor access to resources that promote healthy living — from grocery stores that sell healthy, affordable foods to school environments that promote physical activity to neighborhood infrastructure that affords safe, practical opportunities to play, walk, and bicycle. An array of local, state, and national policies that strengthen neighborhood environments is essential to reverse the epidemic. Community residents have crucial insight into the needs and priorities that must drive these policies, the local strengths that can be tapped to turn policy into action, and the interventions likely to succeed.

Moreover, the process of community engagement itself strengthens the fiber of a community.[1] When residents are involved in every step of policy change, from framing the issues to interpreting the data, to determining solutions, relationships develop, social networks grow, and the sense of possibility blossoms. Health improves, too: Research demonstrates that a population can achieve long-term health improvements when people become involved in their community and work together to bring about change.[2]

Community engagement is an ongoing process that involves people in solving problems, making decisions, determining policies, and shaping programs that affect the places where they and their families live, work, study, and play. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states: "Community engagement often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices."[3] Angela Glover Blackwell, CEO and founder of PolicyLink, describes the role of community members in the policy change process in this manner: "Policy change efforts fall short if residents and those directly impacted do not have voice, participation, and agency in the change process. The highest form of participation is to become an agent of change on your own behalf. Community participation is crucial at every stage: in identifying the problem so that its roots and impacts are fully understood; in crafting solutions, so that they are authentic and likely to be effective; in developing policy so that it will actually accomplish change and spread the best practices as identified by those who will be impacted; in advocating for policy so that the community and residents feel their power, hold

professional advocates accountable, and set up an accountability infrastructure (holding elected officials and government accountable) for the future; and measuring results so that the results that are measured matter."

Community engagement is a strong value and fundamental practice of public health.[4] Successful advocates and community organizers recognize it as a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental changes that will improve the health of members of the community. The case study of the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP), presented in this resource guide, illustrates the point. Organizers of CCROP, which spans an eight-county region with a high concentration of Latino immigrants, many of them poor and undocumented, approach community engagement as a major component of environmental policy change. CCROP leaders and staff view local residents as important partners, not recipients of aid.

Authentic, meaningful community engagement requires a clear definition and understanding of the targeted community. Community is a fluid concept: It can be defined by shared demographic or cultural characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, and gender; or by geographic boundaries such as a neighborhood, or by social, economic or political affiliations such as a school district or a labor union. A person may be a member by choice, happenstance, or birth, and may associate with several communities at a time. In identifying the targeted community, a meaningful engagement strategy takes into account these complex dynamics, the range of cultural and religious identities even in a single community, the relationships within and among sub-groups, and the disparate health impacts on particular groups.

Meaningful engagement also requires inclusion of broad representation from the targeted community. Obesity prevention strategies best reflect the priorities and address the needs of a given community when diverse opinions, insights, and expertise are voiced and heard. Participants may include parents, teachers, or other concerned individuals, or representatives from community-based organizations, schools and other local institutions, faith-based organizations, and local businesses. Trust among the players is essential.

True community engagement is a long-term process. The community participates at all stages and in all significant aspects of the community-change effort, including planning, developing strategy, mobilizing public and political support, crafting policy, implementing solutions, and shaping programs over time. The process should include training and development opportunities, to strengthen participants' skills and capacity to advocate for, lead, and own efforts to transform their community into a healthy place for all.

[1] Blackwell, A.G., Minkler M., Thompson M. "Using Community Organizing and Community Building to Influence Policy." In *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health 2nd Edition,* Meredith Minkler (ed). Piscataway, NJ; Rutgers University Press, 2004.

[2] *Community Involvement in the Federal Healthy Start Program*. PolicyLink. 2000.

[3] Principles of Community Engagement. 1997. CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement. http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pce/.

[4] http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/intro/index.html.

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE

Why Use It?

Childhood obesity threatens the health and future productivity of the nation and nowhere is the crisis more urgent than in low-income communities and communities of color. For example, 43 percent of Mexican American children and 39 percent of African American children are overweight or obese, compared with 33 percent of white children[1]. The long-term consequences include increased risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, arthritis, stroke, sleep disorders, and hypertension[2]. An estimated 300,000 deaths a year may be attributable to obesity[3]. An overweight adolescent has a 70 to 80 percent chance of becoming an obese adult[4].

All these numbers add up to one stark fact: Without concerted efforts to reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity, today's generation of young people may be the first in modern history to live sicker and die younger than their parents.

Authentic community engagement is a cornerstone of action to address this crisis.

Although diet and physical activity habits are matters of personal choice, those choices are influenced — and in too many places, limited — by environmental factors. People of color and low-income people have the fewest opportunities to meet official guidelines for physical activity and healthy eating. However, even in communities that lack access to health-promoting resources, community residents have the best understanding of the barriers to healthy living in their neighborhoods, as well as the assets that can be built upon to create healthy communities. Engaging communities in the policy and environmental change process is a prerequisite for creating and implementing policies that are equitable, meaningful, and enduring.

Community Engagement and Opportunities to Promote Child Health

Community engagement advances the very philosophy that must drive anti-obesity initiatives: diverse interests and partners working together toward a common goal. Residents and other grassroots stakeholders recognize implicitly that the complex issues facing their neighborhoods overlap across sectors, specialties, and government funding streams — and solutions should too. Engaged communities can encourage governments to take strategic, comprehensive approaches to obesity prevention work.

A study of Federal Healthy Start Program sites across the United States found that community involvement produced numerous benefits[5]:

- empowered people to change behaviors and improve health outcomes;
- mobilized the community to achieve health-related goals;

- fostered local partnerships that resulted in more comprehensive services and better resources;
- spurred new policies and programs;
- strengthened grassroots civic participation; and
- helped communities address issues of race, class, and culture.

Other research finds that when resources are devoted to community engagement from the earliest stage and throughout the lifetime of a community revitalization project, it is more likely to remain robust and continue after government funding ends[6].

By informing decision-making and service delivery, engagement can make policies and programs more responsive and sensitive to the needs of the people they serve. Residents understand not only the problems in their communities, but also the strengths and assets that can be capitalized upon to address them.

More broadly, meaningful participation can promote trust, build relationships, teach skills, and empower residents to become advocates for their communities. The environmental improvements necessary to fight obesity — more parks, safer streets, healthy food retail, cleaner air, schools that support fitness and healthy eating —are possible only with strong organizing, mobilization, and staying power. When residents come together around a goal, they get to know one another, feel invested in the betterment of their community, and become determined to fight for changes that improve the lives of all children.

The Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program (CCROPP), profiled in this resource guide, illustrates the changes that engagement can inspire. While the region has a history of labor organizing, grassroots engagement in public health issues was novel. By bringing together people and organizations to learn from one another, share resources, and collaborate, CCROPP has been instrumental in building a collective voice and a sense of regional identity, and these have enabled people to organize more effectively to improve local conditions. Residents now see they are not alone in their efforts, and they have confidence that they can achieve their goals.

Community engagement requires community members willing to get involved, and policymakers and institutional leaders committed to bringing diverse community representatives to the table as full participants, and to providing the resources, training, and development opportunities that enable constituents to join, act, lead, and succeed. Authentic community engagement is a time and energy intensive undertaking, but the results can reap significant rewards. When neighbors know one another, when they feel invested in the betterment of their community, and when they feel empowered to raise their voices, they create ways to join together and fight for changes that improve the lives of everyone[7].

This resource guide provides tools to help community members, advocacy organizations, and policymakers engage in meaningful partnerships with each other in order to improve opportunities for all children and families to lead healthy lives. It offers strategies for conducting community outreach and infusing community needs and perspectives into policy and

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environmental change initiatives. The resource guide also includes a new tool to help coalitions assess the authenticity of their community engagement process.

[1] Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Curtin, L.R., et al. "Prevalence of High Body Mass Index in US Children and Adolescents 2007-2008." *JAMA,* 303(3): 242-249, 2010.

[2] Institute of Medicine Committee on Prevention of Obesity in Children and Youth. *Preventing Childhood Obesity: Health in the Balance.* Washington, D.C.: National Academic Press, 2005.

[3] http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/obesity/calltoaction/fact_consequences.htm.

[4] Ibid.

[5] PolicyLink, 2000. *Community Involvement in the Federal Healthy Start Program*.

[6] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151525.pdf.

[7]Bell, J. and Lee, M. *Why Place and Race Matter*. Oakland, CA; PolicyLink, 2011.

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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.
<div align="center">0 = no/never, 1 = yes, but not recently/need to revisit, 2 = yes/frequently</div>

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
    ___ 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

─── C. Recruit and energize constituency

       i.   [Tips][5] on building a base of people who are engaged in the issue

           ii.   [How to][6] 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.reversechildhoodobesity.org/content/technical-assistance-toolkits. For further technical assistance please contact: ta@reversechildhoodobesity.org

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

[6] http://ccheonline.org/sites/default/files/Coalition_Building_2.pdf