

community engagement framework

a tool by

**QUAKE
LAB** &



OLIP
OTTAWA LOCAL
IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP





introduction

In its simplest terms, community engagement seeks to better build relationships with the community in an effort to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, decision-making, or implementation. Community engagement focuses on fostering and enhancing trust as a critical element in long-term, sustainable engagement and effective governance, while being sensitive to the community-context in which it occurs. It serves to broaden the scope, shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, with the associated implications for inclusiveness to ensure consideration is made of the diversity that exists within any community.

The service planning and delivery cycle comprises the following phases:

Phase 1: Identify the problem

Phase 2: Needs articulated

Phase 3: Program + service + offering developed

Phase 4: Program + service + offering made available

Phase 5: Feedback collected + success measured

Phase 6: Iteration + go back to Phase 1

This resource relates to each part of the service planning and delivery cycle. However, it is particularly important to ensure that when in **Phase 2: Needs articulated**, you are building a thorough understanding of who exactly the problem affects and who is part of the community you are working in service of. In addition, **Phase 5: Feedback collected and success measured** may involve re-engaging with the community for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. This means that you will need to design an approach that best reaches the community to best reflect their thoughts and perceptions.

why is this important?

Equity Ottawa's organizational change domain focused on ensuring equity in service planning and delivery contains action items such as using community input to re-design services to be more culturally and linguistically appropriate and safe, equitable procurement practices, as well as gathering disaggregated feedback from clients and service users. Importantly, this can only be achieved through careful and nuanced consideration of the purpose of community engagement and community members themselves. This resource aims to ensure that equity and intentionality is practiced throughout each step of the engagement.

The goal of this resource is to ensure that Equity Ottawa partners achieve their strategic goals through transparent, accountable, consistent and accessible community engagement. It is also to ensure that any and all community engagement undertaken by Equity Ottawa is based on the values of diversity, equity and inclusion and goal-oriented so that sustainable decisions (i.e. decisions that factor in cultural and social input, finances, and context) are made.

how to use this resource?

This resource is to help your organization answer two critical questions:

1. Should you engage with the community?
2. If yes, then what do you need to consider as you plan community engagements?
3. If you have decided to not engage with the community, then what can you do?

This is to ensure intentionality throughout the entire service planning and delivery process. Consistently iterating is an integral part of equitable service planning and delivery. We recommend taking time to understand your organizational needs and then reviewing what kinds of engagements are most appropriate.

At the end of the first cycle of service delivery and planning (Phase 5), we recommend reviewing feedback mechanisms. We encourage planning these mechanisms beforehand, however improvement throughout the process is always useful.

We'll start by reviewing definitions relevant to this stage to ensure there is a shared understanding of the concepts we will be talking about. Then we will build an understanding of the different types of engagements that exist. Finally, we'll walk through a roadmap of what this process looks like with steps for what your considerations to practice equity should be. The roadmap helps to answer the questions above.



definitions

Before getting started, review the following definitions to ensure you have an understanding of how they will be used throughout this document.

- **Community:** A group of people with shared interests or values or who share an environment.
- **Community engagement:** The process of involving individuals in the decision-making processes of issues that affect them. This includes activities that facilitate an informed dialogue amongst participants and encourages them to share ideas and opinions for decision-making.
- **Engagement:** The overarching process of involving community in decision making processes.
- **Engagement Fatigue:** Lack of community interest in engagement activities which may be caused by over-consultation due to lack of coordination by organization leaders and/or a perceived lack of results from past engagements. Engagement fatigue is exasperated by frequent consultation without implementation of the feedback.

types of community engagement

There are different kinds of engagements that you might be interested in conducting. It is important to consider what outcomes you expect following the engagement period, and what types of feedback you can meaningfully implement.

- **Consult:** the goal is to obtain feedback/gather information on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions
- **Involve:** the goal is to work with community members/groups to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered (discussion-based)
- **Collaborate:** the goal is to facilitate discussions and agreements between community members/groups and your organization to identify and co-create common ground and solutions
- **Empower:** the goal is to create a supportive environment where final decision making power is given to community members/groups (partnership-based)
- **Validate:** the goal is to validate your assumptions and/or decisions that have been already made and implemented.

the roadmap

The objective of this roadmap is to ensure you are being intentional about community engagement. **Most of this work is done prior to the engagement itself. The first four steps are critical in deciding whether community engagement is appropriate.** We then move into how to develop a community engagement plan and what kinds of questions need to be asked to ensure that it is planned equitably.



STEP 1: Explore your intentions and what already exists.

First, make sure your intentions are very clear to ensure there is no ambiguity and explore any material or research that may already exist.

- What is the overall goal of this service/program? Consult the “Who is this service for” tool and go through the guiding questions to ensure that you understand the project and its intended purpose thoroughly.
- What information do you need to implement this service or program?
- Does this information already exist ie. has a process of community engagement already been undertaken in the past to collect this information? Is there secondary research or first person testimonies that provide this information?
- What questions do you want answered from this engagement exercise?
- Do these answers already exist? Do you have enough information from previous engagements or similar projects across partners?
- Is there engagement fatigue within the community?

STEP 2: Explore the organizational perspective.

Next, think about what will go into organizing any kind of community engagement and you can actually do.

- Who is involved in this project?
- Who are the decision-makers? What are their expected outcomes and goals?
- What are your timelines?
- What is the budget?

STEP 3: Explore the community perspective.

After reflecting on what you can do organizationally, think about the community's perspective to help understand what kind of engagement would suit this work best and if you should engage at all.

- What community issues or historical factors impact this service or program? For example, if the service is deployed with police officers, racialized communities may be hesitant to engage, or if the service includes language about testing biological material, Indigenous Peoples who have a history of being used for medical testing purposes without consent might be deeply distrustful and resistant.

- List any current or previous community engagement or communications activities that relate to this issue or may have impacted this issue. Clearly identify the outcomes and findings to identify any overlaps in what you are interested in and new information you might find.
- Is there conflict between your organization and the community? Have there been instances of harm or trust being broken?
- What factors will influence the engagement process?
 - Vacation, holidays, work hours, school hours, accessibility, location, costs, time commitment, etc
- Is there engagement fatigue?
- What risk factors are associated with this engagement? What is the risk if the engagement does not occur?
- How have past engagement exercises failed the community you are working to engage?

STEP 4: Decide if community engagement is appropriate.

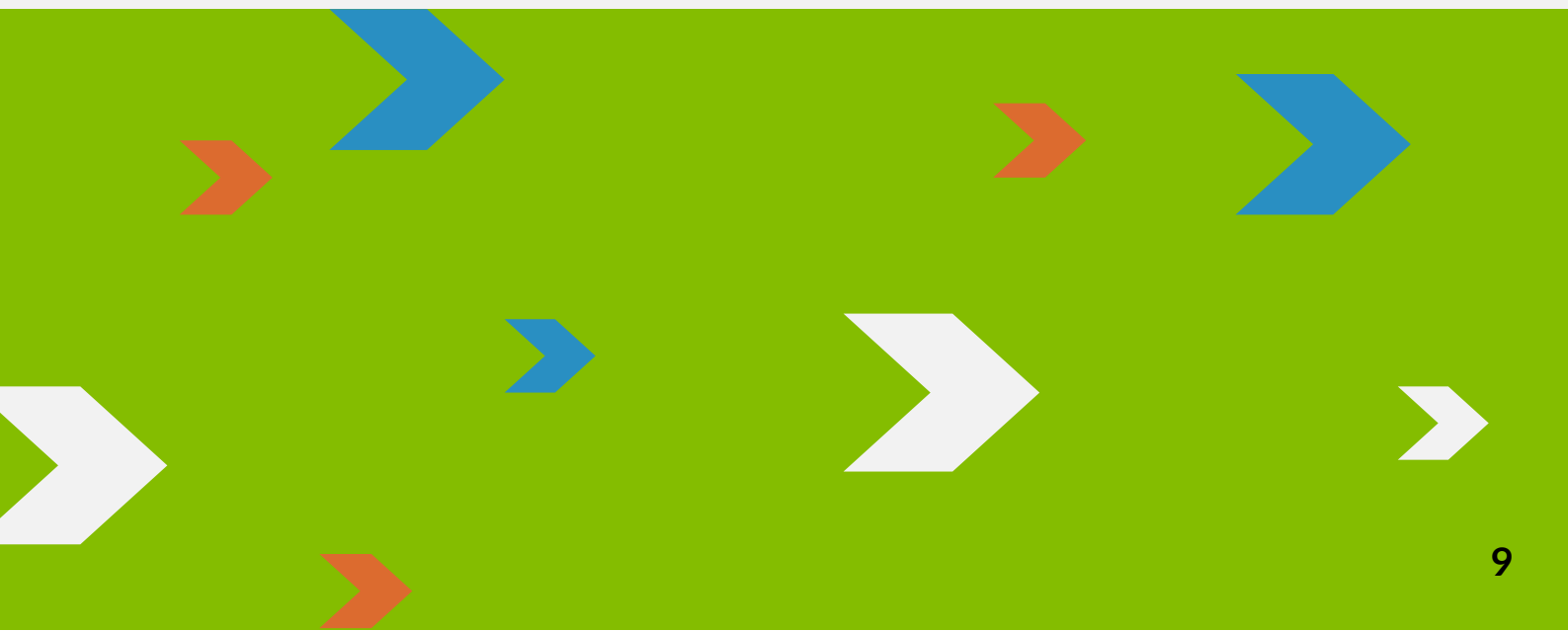
With the above information, think about whether community engagement is indeed appropriate. Think about what kind of community engagement is most effective based on your goals and the types of engagements listed above: consult, involve, collaborate, empower, or validate? What is do-able within the time and budget constraints? If you do not have the time or resources, is it more less harmful to not conduct the engagement?

If you have decided that community engagement is not appropriate, then it is important to think about other pathways to ensure your work is supported by a solid understanding of who are you doing this service for (see "Who is this service for?" tool). You may also need to engage in community trust-building exercises which focus on repairing and supporting the community in ways in which you may have not done before.

STEP 5: Develop the community engagement plan.

- If you have decided that community engagement is appropriate, then you must think about the type of engagement that must occur: consult, involve, collaborate, or empower. Consider the following:
 - Are you trying to gather feedback or further information?
 - Are you trying to involve community members to ensure that you understand their needs?
 - Are you trying to find common ground to uncover solutions
 - Are you trying to create an enabling environment for decisions to be made by the community?
 - Are you trying to validate your assumptions and plans?
- What information do decision-makers need to develop or implement the service or program?
- How will hard-to-reach groups be included?
- How will you ensure that project milestones are included in community communications?
- How much time and money, and how many employees do you require for the community engagement?
- Have you considered accessibility standards and what you must provide? (Refer to Appendix A.)
- How will you ensure privacy and confidentiality?
- What are the languages spoken in the communities that you are trying to serve?

Eventually as you start to implement the plan you must ensure that you adapt to new information and circumstances. Record information such as feedback and comments in a standard place. Ensure that data is weeded through in a systematic way.





now what?

This resource is meant to be an iterative device - used in Phase 2 and 3 as you start developing the service/program and Phase 6, as you revise the service delivered and implement feedback. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that any engagement with the community serves a specific purpose and reaches community members with an equitable and inclusive approach. This methodology focuses a lot on the goals of the engagement which lends itself to helping the engagement planning process. If there is ambiguity about the type or purpose of the engagement, if information is already existing, or if there is engagement fatigue within the community, your organization should halt the process and think of creative ways to plan and deliver the service/program.

appendix A

We encourage organizations to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). Sometimes that might mean doing things in a different way for one person, providing an accessibility accommodation, or changing the way we provide a service that will remove barriers for many people. Accessibility accommodations begin with informing people of a contact person if they require an accommodation under the AODA when sending out meeting notices.

Accessibility accommodations may include but are not limited to:

- Providing information in different formats, such as formatted documents for text to speech software, adjusting colours to provide high contrast or using larger fonts
- Providing written and verbal description of charts, tables, drawings or any other visuals
- Hosting meetings **ONLY** in buildings which are fully accessible to wheelchairs/walkers
- Offering service of an American Sign Language interpreter
- Offering assistive devices, such as amplified hearing equipment
- Removing barriers for many people may include:
 - Providing information in plain language
 - Ensuring that level of lighting is appropriate for all displays and work areas during meetings
 - Setting up a meeting space that includes aisles wide enough for two people to comfortably pass each other with walkers or wheelchairs
 - Ensuring that events are held with enough ventilation and seats are spaced out
 - Ensuring that masks are mandatory
- Offering services in multiple languages
- Making hybrid and virtual options available along side in-person
- Financial accessibility
- Location accessibility and proximity to public transport
- Accessibility for parents and caregivers