




Worksheet: Community Engagement Spectrum¹

Increasing Impact on Decision-Making and Implementation 				
INFORMING	CONSULTING	INVOLVING	COLLABORATING	EMPOWERING
Providing balanced and objective information about new programs or services, and about the reasons for choosing them	Inviting feedback on alternatives, analyses, and decisions related to new programs or services	Working with community members to ensure that their aspirations and concerns are considered at every stage of planning and decision-making. We also engage their assets as partners to implement solutions.	Enabling community members to participate in every aspect of planning and decision-making for new programs or services. Community members actively produce outcomes.	Giving community members sole decision-making authority over new programs or services, and lead work to implement solutions. Professionals only serve in consultative and supportive roles
We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to your input and feedback, and let you know your ideas and concerns have influenced decisions	We will ensure your input and feedback is directly reflected in alternatives, and let you know how your involvement influenced decisions. We will engage you as partners to implement solutions.	We will co-create and co-produce solutions with you. You will be true partners in making and implementing decisions for the community, your advice and recommendations will be incorporated as much as possible.	We will support your decisions and work to implement solutions.
Fact sheets, newsletters, websites, open houses	Surveys, focus groups, community meetings and forums	Community organizing, leadership development, workshops	Advisory boards, seats on governing boards, engaging and funding as partners	Support full governance, leadership, and partnership

Choose your community engagement strategy, clarify the promise to community members, and then fulfill those promises. Engagement is obviously most robust on the right side of the diagram. This can also be read as a spectrum between buy-in and ownership. On the left side, we are often mobilizing people to support or provide limited input or feedback to our decisions. On the right side, we are organizing people to identify their interests and assets – they become deciders, outcome producers, advocates, leaders. It is about shifting power to community.

It is not always necessary, appropriate, or within your capacity to practice collaborative or empowering approaches, but you should push your assumptions and comfort to move as far right as appropriate. Moving to the right means giving up power, because this work is not about your power, but about community results

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¹ Adapted from Paul Schmitz's Community Engagement Toolkit and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).

Worksheet: Community Engagement Spectrum *(continued)*

It is essential that wherever you are on the spectrum, you must be clear and transparent about your position and fulfill the promises of being there. The greatest tensions and conflicts come when leaders promise a more involved, collaborative, or empowering level of engagement but deliver an informing or consulting level. If you aspire to more engagement, communicate that and take clear steps that demonstrate your commitment is real. It is also important to be transparent about how much power you are willing to give away or not.

Instructions: Reflect individually on the below questions, pair up with someone to discuss, and then debrief as a full group.

Where are your community engagement efforts now on the spectrum? Where do you aspire to be?

For where you aspire to be, what steps will you need to take to pursue that level of engagement? What power or control do you have to give up?

What expectations will you need to communicate and fulfill for community members?