Dear Local Planning Bodies,

It was requested at the 2019 Fall Florida Comprehensive Planning Network (FCPN) meeting that guidance be developed on how local areas should approach community engagement. The Florida Department of Health, HIV/AIDS Section worked with the FCPN – Coordination of Efforts committee to identify available resources to assist local areas.

There are many definitions of “community.” Community may refer to geographically defined areas or groups that share a common history or interest, a sense of collective identity, shared values and norms, mutual influence among members, common symbols or some combination of these dimensions.

Community engagement is about ensuring that those most impacted by social challenges have a say in designing and implementing solutions. The participation of intended beneficiaries and their families, neighbors, and trusted leaders can be an integral part of data-driven processes to achieve better results. And a shift in power where community members own and help produce the result will lead to greater impact. Authentic community engagement establishes or re-establishes the connection between organizations and communities, creating more effective strategies and healthier communities.¹

The following resources and tips are meant to guide local planning leaders and groups through a process of building community engagement strategies that will achieve better results for their communities and facilitate authentic discussions on area needs and priorities.

These resources are compiled from:

- **Knowledge Works Foundation:** 10 Principles of Authentic Community Engagement
- **GroundWork USA:** Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement
- **City of Minneapolis:** Core Principles of Community Engagement
- **Collective Impact Forum:** Community Engagement Toolkit

We welcome ideas, tips, feedback and additional tools. The goal is to support better engagement to achieve results.

Sincerely,

The FCPN-Coordination of Efforts Committee
and the HIV/AIDS Section

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It is common for education stakeholders to assert the need for community engagement in schools. In fact, the term “community engagement” has become something of a buzzword. But what does it really mean? How does it work? Authentic community engagement re-establishes the connection between schools and communities, creating more effective schools and healthier neighborhoods. Done well, authentic community engagement leads to schools that are central to the life and learning of the entire community and that embody community values. In addition, community engagement fosters community ownership of schools and education reform, helping to sustain important school improvements. Based on the experience of KnowledgeWorks Foundation and others, the following 10 guiding principles are critical.

1. **Involves all sectors of the community.** Important stakeholders come from all segments of the community, including parents, teachers, students, neighbors, businesses, community-based organizations, and others. Schools perform best when all stakeholders are involved.

2. **Asks the community to engage on important questions and acknowledges its views and contributions.** It also connects with and influences official decisions. Authentic community engagement is not about getting a community to “buy-in” to a decision that has already been made. It is about soliciting community input to inform and make local decisions.

3. **Involves the community early in the process.** In order for community members to provide input and become educated on the subject at hand, they should be involved early in the process.

4. **Offers opportunities for people to gather at convenient and comfortable locations at a variety of convenient times.** Community meetings should not be held solely at schools. There are numerous places where community members are already accustomed to gathering. Potential spaces include a favorite local restaurant, church, or community member’s home.

5. **Consists of more than one meeting and allows time in the process to make informed judgments.** While opinions can be developed quickly, it takes time over multiple meetings to form judgments on significant courses of action that are based on a community’s value system and a solid understanding of the relevant information. Time between meetings is critical to digesting previous discussions and information in order to inform future discussions and decisions.

6. **Is driven by aspirations that communities hold for their future.** Rather than centering on others’ ideas about what will be important to a community, a community’s values and aspirations should inform discussion and action.

7. **Has a learning component that helps build community awareness and knowledge around the subject at hand.** Communities can make better decisions if they have access to current research and local information.

8. **Allows for sustained involvement by community stakeholders.** Authentic community engagement encourages stakeholders to remain involved in the implementation of decisions and in future school issues. Authentic community engagement creates a sense of ownership within a community, which is a key factor in sustaining school improvement efforts.

9. **Utilizes community partnerships and expertise.** Community-based organizations are often particularly well-suited to assist schools in leading and facilitating the community engagement process due to their established credibility in a community and ability to engender trust. These organizations often understand a community’s unique needs, aspirations, and context.

10. **Employs clear, open, and consistent communication.** Schools, their partnering community engagement organizations, and community members must be open and honest with each other in order to build the trust that is essential to this process. The goals and purposes of the initiative must be made clear to all. The engagement process, decision steps, meeting protocols, and commonly used language and terminology should be understood by all stakeholders.
Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement

Tips for Engaging Historically Underrepresented Populations in Visioning and Planning

The wider the variety of world views and lived experiences that inform a community visioning or planning process, the more likely it is that the built project or resulting plan will address the needs and opportunities of even the most vulnerable or most marginalized person in the community.

Meaningful community engagement can take shape in a variety of ways and requires time and flexibility. Building trusting relationships with people—and finding a variety of ways to enable their connection to a project, a process, or a group of people—requires sustained effort. Here are some tips to help strengthen the interpersonal connections across your community:

Identify who is underrepresented at your meeting or event.
- Why do you define this particular population this way?
- How can this information guide your planning and outreach efforts?

Put yourself in other people’s shoes.
- What factors (besides meeting content) would guarantee attendance?
- How might you eliminate common barriers to showing up?*

Listen more than you speak.
- Seek the perspective, expertise and lived experience of each person you meet.

Gather input and buy-in on your project, its aims, and its marketing materials.
- Seek input from the groups you are actively trying to engage.
- Invest time in building relationships with grassroots community leaders who may serve as information conduits. Acknowledge their time and efforts explicitly.

Address language barriers.
- Eliminate use of technical jargon and acronyms during meetings.
  - Define all new terminology on the white board, or in a glossary of terms, where everything is boiled down into easy-to-grasp language.
- Dedicate funds for interpretation and translation services.
- Connect with community and cultural groups to gather information:
  - What language(s) does your constituency speak? Is literacy an issue?
  - Who might you recommend to do translation into X language?
    - Can you introduce me to that person?

* Common barriers could include accessibility issues, lack of transportation, or cultural barriers.
Be thoughtful about location of meetings and events.
- Can everyone get there easily via public transit, especially by bus?
- Is the location “neutral”?
- Is the venue familiar and accessible to everyone involved?

Get creative in defining what “engagement” looks and feels like.
- Create a multitude of ways for people to get involved.
- Hands-on activities—a river cleanup or a playground build—get people working side-by-side, sharing an experience, meeting and speaking with one another.

Tap existing networks to spread the word.
- Published public notices may follow the letter of the law, but they can never replace intentional outreach or one-to-one engagement.
- Word of mouth is time-tested and never goes out of style!
- Invest time in connecting with member organizations to multiply your reach.

Provide food and childcare at all events.
- Publicize these offerings in your outreach.
- Create ways for children to contribute and participate in the process, too.

Verbally and publicly acknowledge citizen distrust and historical patterns of decision making that is not reflective of previously gathered public input.
- If you name it and own it, you set the tone for open conversation.
- Demonstrate you are willing to engage honestly.

Manage expectations by being up front and honest.
- Let participants know all the “non-negotiables” up front.
- Be transparent in describing your team’s roles and responsibilities, capacities and limitations, especially time and financial constraints.
- Don’t solicit input if there’s no opportunity to influence a decision already made!

Take time to establish “rules of engagement,” sourced from stakeholders in the room.
- Build stakeholder ownership of the process from the beginning.
  - Establish shared culture and norms regarding expectations for participation, boundaries for folks who might take more “airtime,” and permission for those who tend to say less in a group setting.

Ensure your team’s manner and practice reflect core principles of inclusiveness, equity, justice, reliability, respect, transparency, cultural competence, and active listening.

Make it right when something goes wrong. When receiving feedback about meeting format, or something said or unsaid, be gracious. Validate the concerns of the messenger and make a verbal correction or acknowledgement in real time.

*See next page for Commonly Cited Reasons Why People Don’t Show Up.*
Commonly Cited Reasons Why People Don’t Show Up

*Insights from the Field on Engaging Historically Underrepresented Groups in Visioning and Planning*

A key step in preparing to lead a community visioning and planning process, along with cultural competency training, includes educating yourself and your team about possible reasons why people don’t show up at public meetings or participate in planning processes. Practitioners interviewed by the Groundwork USA team shared the following commonly cited reasons for not showing up:

- Lack of knowledge of the political system
- Previous negative community engagement experience
- Historical patterns of municipal decisions not reflecting community input, broken promises made by political candidates, or both, resulting in reinforced distrust of government and institutions
- Economic barriers; needing to focus on basic needs of self and family
- Not seeing one’s own culture or identity reflected in meeting format or content
- Fear of being judged, unsafe, or unwelcome
- Transportation barriers
- Childcare needs
- Spiritual beliefs/practices
- Immigration status
- Meeting time or date does not consider work schedules, religious holidays, mealtimes, or other family needs

While not definitive, these perspectives are valid and should be considered when planning a meeting or gathering of any kind.
City of Minneapolis - Core Principles of Community Engagement

In 2007, the Minneapolis City Council adopted Core Principles of Community Engagement. These should continue to be at the core of a community engagement policy.

**Right to be involved.** Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

**Contribution will be thoughtfully considered.** Public participation includes the promise that the public’s contribution will be thoughtfully considered.

**Recognize the needs of all.** Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interest of all participants, including decision-makers.

**Seek out involvement.** Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

**Participants design participation.** Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

**Adequate Information.** Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.

**Known effect of participation.** Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

**Core Principles for a Citywide Community Engagement Policy**

To implement these principles, the City also must consider these additional principles:

- decision processes must be clear, open and predictable
- roles and authority must be clear and well understood
- communication must be two-way and consistent
- representative participation is needed at all levels
- participants at all levels must be held accountable
- genuine engagement (not just input) is essential
- local and citywide plans should be related and consistent
- change must occur to build trust and participation
- Neighborhood Organizations and Cultural Community Organizations should be viewed as partners with City departments and should play a vital role in any engagement activity
Structure of a Citywide Community Engagement Policy

The City of Minneapolis, Neighborhood Organizations, Cultural Community Organizations, key stakeholders and the wider community engage with each other at different levels along a spectrum of increasing involvement. The process of community engagement is a dynamic one for which there is likely to be movement back and forth through the different levels as an engagement model is implemented.

To provide consistent service across City departments and in the community, the Work Group recommends that the City of Minneapolis use the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) model for community engagement. This model has proven to be effective and provides good techniques for staff to properly conduct public participation processes. It also provides Neighborhood Organizations and Cultural Community Organizations with the information they need to be involved in a meaningful way and communicates to residents how their input affects the decisions that need to be made.

The chart on the next page depicts varying levels of participation, depending on the goals, time frames, resources and levels of public concern or interest in the decision. Most importantly, each participation level involves a promise to the public that if not defined or understood clearly by both participants and decision makers, can result in dissatisfaction in the process and outcomes. At all public participation levels, promises should be clear – and promises must be kept.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>INFORM</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONSULT</strong></th>
<th><strong>INOLVE</strong></th>
<th><strong>COLLABORATE</strong></th>
<th><strong>EMPOWER</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>One-way communication to provide balanced and objective information to assist understanding about something that is going to happen or has already happened.</td>
<td>Two-way communication process aimed at obtaining feedback on ideas, alternatives and proposals to inform our decision making.</td>
<td>Participatory process designed to help identify issues and views to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</td>
<td>Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred collective solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of community and/or stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>Listen - Understand</td>
<td>Contribute</td>
<td>Partner with the City of Minneapolis</td>
<td>Lead the process: program and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples when this engagement level may be appropriate</strong></td>
<td>In the event of an emergency, Snow Emergencies Street Sweeping</td>
<td>Undertaking a survey on playground redevelopment, Provide feedback to a proposal</td>
<td>Seeking input from a Citizen Advisory Council (CAC).</td>
<td>Stakeholder-led discussions on developing community vision key directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Possible methods</strong></td>
<td>• Advertisements • Fact sheets • Newsletter • Public Notices • Social media • Websites • Neighborhood Orgs. advised • Cultural Orgs. advised</td>
<td>• Focus groups • Public exhibition • Surveys • Neighborhood Orgs. Opinions sought • Cultural Orgs. Opinions sought</td>
<td>• Advisory committees • Deliberate voting on options • Workshops • Neighborhood Orgs. Formal resolutions • Cultural Orgs. Formal resolutions</td>
<td>• Consensus building • Participatory decision making • Participant led workshops • Neighborhood Org. at planning table • Cultural Org. at planning table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise to the Public</strong></td>
<td>We will keep you informed</td>
<td>We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge your concern, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.</td>
<td>We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how the public input influenced the decision</td>
<td>We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We will implement what you decide.</td>
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</table>
Commitment to a Community Engagement Framework

The Work Group further recommends that the City of Minneapolis adopt the modified a Citywide Community Engagement Framework.

**Purpose.** We encourage and support public participation as a process to make better decisions that incorporate the interests and concerns of all affected stakeholders and meet the needs of the decision-making body.

**Role of Practitioner.** We will enhance the public's participation in the decision-making process and assist decision-makers in being responsive to the public's concerns and suggestions.

**Trust.** We will undertake and encourage actions that build trust and credibility for the process among all the participants.

**Defining the Public’s Role.** We will accurately portray the public's role in the decision-making process.

**Openness.** We will encourage the disclosure of all information relevant to the public's understanding and evaluation of a decision.

**Access to the Process.** We will ensure that stakeholders have fair and equal access to the public participation process and the opportunity to influence decisions.

**Respect for Communities.** We will avoid strategies that risk polarizing community interests or that appear to "divide and conquer." Neighborhood Organizations and cultural community organizations will be treated as partners and play a vital role in any community engagement activity.

**Advocacy.** We will advocate for the public participation process and will not advocate for interest, party or project outcome.

**Commitments.** We ensure that all commitments made to the public, including those by the decision-maker, are made in good faith.

**Support of the Practice.** We will mentor new practitioners in the field and educate decision-makers and the public about the value and use of public participation.

**Accountability.** Every City department shall abide by the Citywide Community Engagement Policy in good faith, in both planning and implementation. Departments should include their community engagement efforts in their internal and external reporting. Departmental “Dashboards” and “Results Minneapolis” presentations should include metrics for measurement of these engagement efforts. Repeated underperformance in community engagement may result in a budgetary penalty. Any such budget reduction would be placed in a reserve account for community engagement activities. Neighborhood Organizations, cultural community organizations and other funded entities will have engagement activity expectations written into contracts.

**Review and Evaluation.** This policy will be reviewed annually by the governance body for community engagement.
Choose your community engagement strategy, clarify the promise to community members, and then fulfill those promises. Engagement is obviously most robust on the right size 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 This is adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)
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.

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?
Community Engagement Toolkit

Equity – Who is at our Tables?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Defined

- **Diversity**: Engaging people with different backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, and recognizing the differences as assets to learning and innovation.
- **Inclusion**: Authentic and empowered participation, a true sense of belonging.
- **Equity**: Recognizing that everyone does not start at the same place, so some people will need different resources or support to achieve the same outcome. The goal is to eliminate disparities and level the playing field.

**Assess your tables**

Understanding who is on your team or committee in these ways can help you identify what strengths and gaps you have in terms of experience and context expertise about the intended beneficiaries, issues, and neighborhoods you serve. If the majority of your team is in the outer circle, you need to address equity at your table and your need for community engagement is more acute.

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1. **Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity and Inclusion Within Your Organization**, Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014 is a great resource for this work.
Please map your core team, board, or steering committee based on where individuals are on the map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map your Core Team/Committee</th>
<th>Direct Relevance</th>
<th>Secondary Relevance</th>
<th>Limited Relevance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Background</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geographic Relevance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue Experience</td>
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</table>

Do you feel you have the right mix of actors involved to understand the population, issue, and neighborhoods you wish to help?

What gaps are at your tables? What steps could you take to correct for that?
[examples of steps include adding people to your committee, hiring people, forming an advisory group, seeking professional support, and partnering with other groups]
Community Engagement Toolkit

Tips for Orienting & Supporting Successful Engagement

“If we commit to engaging community members, we have to set them up for success. We have to orient them to our world and engage in theirs.” – Angela Frusciante, William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund

1. **Clarify and communicate purpose.** Be clear that community members and grass roots leaders are assets to your initiative who you need to achieve better results. It is important that everyone at the table share and commit to this view. It is important that community members understand their value and their roles, and that they are not tokenized.

2. **Meet them where they are.** Consider community members’ and grass roots leaders’ interests, needs, and possible barriers to participation. Identify ways to accommodate them and make it easier to participate. Consider where meetings and forums are held and meeting times. Some groups offer transportation, food, childcare, and even compensation (professionals are paid for their time attending these meetings so why not community members). Partner with groups that have high engagement and support them to connect you with their audiences.

3. **Orient and prepare community members for success.** Understand what community members and grass roots leaders’ interests and needs are for participating. Ensure that they understand:
   - Share what decisions were made to date, why, how, and by whom – make clear which decisions are final and which ones may be revisited;
   - Review data and analyses that has shaped understanding of the issues and strategies and key jargon, players working on the issue;
   - Outline the big issues, opportunities, and challenges the initiative faces;
   - Clarify their roles, responsibilities, expectations, and boundaries. Recognize the distinction between being “the voice of the community” versus being “a voice of the community” – *no one person or small group of people can speak for an entire community*; and
   - Introduce them to the other members’ positions, roles, and dynamics.

4. **Acknowledge and mitigate power differentials to ensure fair treatment.** Make sure that communication is transparent and community members and grass roots leaders are invited, included, and responded to as robustly as those who lead major institutions. Ensure that institutional leaders’ interests at the table are transparent to all, and that there is not a meeting before or after the meeting that is the “real” meeting (of course there may be planning meetings or committees, but in service of the full group). Encourage institutional leaders to step back from the table to create space for community members’ voices.

5. **Facilitate inclusively.** Encourage participation, call on those who have not spoken, explain concepts that may be new to members, call out jargon, spell out acronyms, describe insider baseball when referenced. Go around the table and ask each person their view. Make sure everyone is engaged.
6. **Allow for some steam to blow.** When people’s voices have been ignored and discounted and they are finally invited to be at the table, those voices are often angry, frustrated, or disappointed. The way one builds trust is to listen, acknowledge, and demonstrate (not just tell them) how things will be different. If the items above have been done, it will demonstrate that things are different and if they are not dismissed or disrespected when they voice their beliefs or grievances, they will start to feel more valued. This is another patient urgency moment. If people are stuck in the anger and grievances, it does not move you toward your result, but if you create space to voice and address those anger and grievances it can accelerate the trust necessary to achieve results.

**Identify what action steps you will take to practice these tips in your engagement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIP</th>
<th>ACTION STEPS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarify/Communicate Purpose</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet them Where They Are</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orient/Prepare for Success</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mitigate Power Differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate Inclusively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Allow for Steam Blowing</td>
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When working with grantees to improve performance or bring a new service in, we assess the state of an organization’s relationships. What level of trust does the organization have within their community. If that trust is high, we’ll build capacity and partner with them.” – Nicole Angresano, United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County

When identifying partners to implement programs and services to achieve your results, start local. It may be enticing to approach a shiny, national model program or a program from another part of the community and import it. First, one should assess if there (a) are other programs or organizations in the specific community providing similar services already; (b) if there are organizations or programs that have strong community trust that could expand programming to include it; and (c) if community residents and partners see the new program or imported group as an asset they welcome. Whether the best strategy turns out to be building capacity of existing providers, bringing in a new provider, or both, doing the work to make sure it is trusted and welcome will set it up for greater success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations that currently work on your result with intended beneficiaries</th>
<th>List Organizations</th>
<th>How might you partner with them?</th>
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</table>

DRAFT
Organizations that serve the specific geographic neighborhoods

Organizations most trusted by intended beneficiaries (How do you know?)

“Organizations don’t collaborate, people do, based on common purpose, trust, and relationships.”

— Dan Duncan, Clear Impact.
The drive to move urgently to address social challenges is understandable. But the investment of time on engagement up front saves a much bigger investment of time later if there is distrust or conflict in the community. If you see community engagement as necessary to achieve better results, you will allow the time to do it right and avoid the short-cuts that often backfire in the long run.

This is why community engagement requires “patient urgency.” We must be patient to build relationships, agree upon goals, align on strategies and tactics, orient and develop people where needed, resolve conflicts and differences, and engage in more democratized decision making. At the same time, we must pursue actions that build momentum that improves peoples’ lives. And we must provide elected officials and grant makers signs of momentum so they may continue to champion the work. If we are clear and in agreement on our results, we can ensure that our engagement is directed toward advancing our results and not an exercise in work avoidance.

This is not a tension to solve, but a tension to hold. You will make trade-offs in each direction. You should be clear what those are, name them, and be clear that those trade-offs are in service to the larger goal.

"You have to give folks who are ready to run work that will keep them energized, and [you have to] give others time to absorb change and build trust in the process. It takes patience and relationships to make it work.” – Monique Baptiste-Good, Strong Healthy Communities Initiative, Newark

What work will you need to slow down in order to advance community engagement?
What might you have to trade off in the short term?

How do we ensure that our patient engagement is advancing our result?

Are there some early wins you can achieve during the engagement process that will build momentum and build collaborative muscles for bigger goals?