

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCIENCE

Points of emphasis to enhance involvement from community members

1. **Timing:** Invite stakeholders and interested parties to contribute ideas before RFPs (Requests for Proposals) are released.

2. **Stakeholder Team Composition:** Teams should be comprised of at least 30% grassroots advocates and not more than 50% professionals. Peers are a source of innovation because they have been consumers of the systems in question. Choose neutral funding resources and facilitators for coalition meetings. Allow equal representation for parties present on the agenda.

3. **Allow Conflict:** The most productive coalitions have a process to allow conflict. Remember to follow trauma care principles within respectful dialogue.

4. **Stick to the True Nature of Coalitions:** Coalitions do these things well: raise money, distribute ideas, and advocate for policy change. It has been proven that coalitions do not manage programs, innovate, or gather grassroots input well.

5. **Input Accessibility Structure:** Options include: online surveys, focus groups, street interviews, text, and phone calls. Be culturally competent - meetings don't work for many due to their limitations.

6. **Choose Trained Advocates:** Passion is great, but community advocates should be trained for advocacy and equipped with information regarding community-specific history and needs.

7. **Pay Advocates for Their Time:** Advocates have to take time off their jobs or their freelance work to participate in meetings. This can make it difficult for them to attend.

8. **Keep Trying:** Provide a variety of invitational opportunities to community members and stakeholders with consistent accountability. Even if most people do not come to the first meeting, keep inviting, keep pushing, keep pursuing. It is common that with a new effort trust and knowledge must be built. It may take upwards of 3 invitations before some respond. Keep trying.

