



TOOL RECRUITMENT REFLECTION

OVERVIEW

Increasingly, communities are calling for their local institutions to involve community members in the decision-making process. Organization leaders may even be required through a grant or a law to conduct community engagement before moving forward. Why? Because those closest to the problem are closest to the solutions. But this doesn't mean that when you host a community forum, people will show up. The strategies in this toolkit can help with ensuring you're able to hear from diverse voices.

WHEN TO USE

The strategies in this toolkit can be used to prepare for an upcoming engagement opportunity and design tactics for recruitment. Alternatively, they can be used as prompts to guide reflection after an event on what worked and what didn't. In this case, you can use these strategies in combination with a [Before and After Action Review](#) process to support your team's learning.

HOW TO USE

When engaging with community members, organizers need to decrease the barriers to participation while increasing the benefits of participation. Different groups have different barriers and have different benefits that appeal to them. Start by identifying the communities that are deeply impacted by the issue you'd like to engage them in, but least likely to attend an event. For example, if you wanted to host a statewide forum on climate change, rural farmers could be a group deeply affected by the impacts of drought, but less likely than climate activists to attend an event. Alternatively, if you wanted to host a conversation on the city's transportation plan, you might have to work hardest to engage folks currently using public transportation who may not work a traditional 9 to 5 job.

Barriers to Participation

Once you've identified a few target groups you want to focus your attention on, begin by reflecting on what specific barriers they'd face in participating in your event. We'll group these barriers into two categories: external and internal. External barriers are any barriers that



prevent someone from getting to the event. Internal barriers are what stop someone from participating once they've made it to the event.

External Barriers

- Did they receive an invite?
- Did they have transportation?
- Did they have time to attend?
- Would attending the event mean giving up something else (i.e. work, family time)?
- Did they have Wi-Fi and technology needed to attend a virtual event?
- Did they trust the organization/location hosting the event?
- Were they interested/affected by the issue?

Internal Barriers

- Were they the only person of a given identity at their table?
- Did some participants dominate the conversation more than others?
- Was there a facilitator present?
- Was the forum offered in their primary language?
- Did they believe their voice would make a difference?
- Did they have enough knowledge to form an opinion?

This list of barriers is just to get you started but is by no means an exhaustive list of barriers. It is also rarely possible to address every potential barrier, but reflecting on the possible barriers can help you identify which barriers you'd like to prioritize addressing. Going back to our first example of engaging rural farmers, organizers may decide to host an event virtually to cut down on travel time for participants. If they do that, however, they may need to provide hotspots to address Wi-Fi issues and host a pre-call to address any tech issues in advance of the event.

Benefits of Participation

Then you can work on increasing the benefits of participation. Once again, we'll group the benefits into two different categories: material and symbolic.

Material

Material benefits are concrete, visible items that people can gain by attending. They include:

- Transportation
- Childcare
- Gift Cards
- Stipends/Payment
- Food

- Laptop
- Hotspot

Symbolic

Symbolic benefits are those you can't immediately see but provide value to someone. They include:

- Educational benefit
 - Do participants gain knowledge?
- Experience builder
 - Can participants add this to their resume?
- Decision-making power
 - Will they be able to make the final decision and gain access to power?
- Social benefit
 - Will they be able to build relationships that will benefit them?
 - Will they receive recognition that will boost their social status?

One example of community engagement that uses symbolic benefits is [Youth Lead the Change](#) in Boston. Each year, youth volunteer to lead a [Participatory Budgeting](#) process where they get to design proposals and vote on a way to spend millions of dollars from the city's capital budget. While they don't get the material benefit of being paid, they receive multiple symbolic benefits. They have direct decision-making power over large amounts of public dollars, giving them a good bit of power. They also get t-shirts that say, "I've been managing millions since I was a teenager," that boost their reputation. The time that they spend working on the project can be added to their resume as a form of experience too.



After identifying your barriers and benefits, you can prioritize a few tactics you'd like to use to recruit your target communities. Come back to these questions throughout your process and adjust your tactics as you learn more about what works. For example, when working with the [San Luis Valley Opioid Governance Council](#), the council wanted to engage community members with lived experience with opioids in the process. The council needed to decide



how to spend \$300,000 every two years, for the next 18 years. Initially the Canopy worked to recruit folks with lived experience onto the council. This somewhat worked, but there are several barriers that made it hard. None of these folks had access to computers and may not have been used to joining Zoom meetings. Even with gift cards to compensate them for their time, making bi-weekly meetings was difficult as they navigated other more pressing needs (i.e. securing work, housing challenges). Mid-way through the facilitator pivoted and tried recruiting folks with lived experience to a one-time, in-person event where they could share their stories and provide advice on the solutions the council was considering. Having a trust-building in-person meeting was much more comfortable and ended up getting folks interested in becoming council members.

COMMUNITY LEARNING MODEL

Include

Ensure the various people, perspectives and systems involved in the work are engaged in the process.

Recruitment Reflection is a tool for the Include phase of the Community Learning Model. To learn more about tools for dialogue and the other areas of the Community Learning Model, visit civiccanopy.org/clm.

