

BUILDING EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES

Seven Principles for Successful Community Engagement

> Sherrye Willis, MBA Comfort Brown Angela A. Johnson, Ph.D.





ROOTED in Service Committed to EQUITY

— Celebrating 20 Years —

Copyright © 2021 Alliance for Greater Works

OUR MISSION

Transforming marginalized communities so that all people have opportunities to thrive.

OUR VISION

A world where everyone is empowered to be all that they are created to be, regardless of the zip code in which they happen to live.



Table of Contents

Introduction

Principle 1:	Listen to Understand	4
Principle 2:	Be Honest	5
Principle 3:	Build Trust	6
Principle 4:	Make Connections	7
Principle 5:	Share Knowledge	8
Principle 6:	Engage All Voices	9
Principle 7:	Work Together	10



INTRODUCTION:

Community Engagement is HOPE.

Never before have communities been more challenged than in 2020.

COVID-19 changed the way we work, play, and live. Every aspect of our daily lives has been disrupted. The "new normal" became a catch phrase to encapsulate collective trauma and confusion.

As we entered 2021, a new set of challenges such as vaccine distribution, inclement weather disasters, collided with COVID-19, adding to increased hardships throughout marginalized communities.

The ability for communities to work together with an equity lens is essential to ensure the wellbeing of everyone.

Foundations, corporations, nonprofits, ministry, and community leaders all want to see changed lives in the communities they serve. There is HOPE when communities work together to address local and global challenges that impact our lives. The power of unity can never be underestimated.

For 20 years, Alliance for Greater Works has prepared, positioned and propelled more than 25,000 leaders to create equitable communities regionally, nationally, and globally.

Looking back on Alliance's history, we are pleased to share the seven principles of successful community engagement in marginalized communities in the following pages.

I hope it will inspire you to believe that not only is engaging every voice in community desired to truly make a lasting difference in addressing our most complex problems we are experiencing today, but necessary.

I am grateful for your interest in learning more about engaging diverse people throughout your community.

Sincerely,

Sherrye Willis Founding President and CEO Alliance for Greater Works







PRINCIPLE #1: Listen to Understand

The "Here We Come to Save the Day!" Mindset Blocks Sustainable Solutions.

Let's be candid. No one knows it all. But there is great knowledge within a community. One of the greatest assets in every community is its people.

Listening is arguably one of the most difficult skills in communication. In fact, the biggest problem is that **we do not listen to understand. We listen to respond.**

Think about the last time you heard, "You're not listening" although you believed you were listening? Let's face it, listening is hard and tiring.

When we listen to respond to what a person is saying, we keep control of the conversation. When we listen to understand, we stay completely focused on what the person is saying without already preparing a "counter-response." So, next time you are engaging communities:

01

DON'T INTERRUPT – The first and most obvious tip for being a good listener is to resist interrupting when people are speaking. Let them finish. Truly listen to understand their story.

02

DON'T JUMP TO CONCLUSIONS – Take time to reflect and paraphrase the big picture which demonstrates you have listened. Another tip is to speak from others point of view and not your own.

BE EMPATHETIC – Try to put yourself in others' shoes. Let people express themselves — and truly try to understand their plight.

BE AWARE OF BIASES AND PERCEPTION -

Be open-minded to the information being shared, without allowing preconceived bias or judgements to override conversations. Making quick judgments can lead to regrets and hinder relationships.

Research shows that only about 10% Of US listen effectively.

Source: Monica Bâldea, and Ancuţa Bâlteanu. "The Importance Of Information Sources In Effective Listening Process In Organizations." Fiabilitate Şi Durabilitate, 1-supl, no. 1, 2014, pp. 333–339.

ALLIANCE for GREATER WORKS

Source: Psychology Today, Posted Oct 5, 2016



PRINCIPLE #2: Be Honest

"Honest communication is built on truth and integrity and upon respect of the one for the other." – Dr. Benjamin E. Mays

Honesty is the single most important tool for effective community engagement.

No community deserves to be deceived — particularly, marginalized communities that are all too often the recipients of exploitation. A book of wisdom, Proverbs, puts it this way, "Whoever speaks truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit."

Community work is delicate. Handle it with care. Let people know your true purpose and intentions. It's important to demonstrate integrity by offering equal opportunities and access to knowledge and resources for all people.

Two ways to demonstrate honesty:



QUALITY TIME – Set aside time for honest communications that include discussing issues and listening to understand concerns. The more quality time you spend on honest communication, the more ideas will be shared authentically.



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS – Encourage people to share ideas or talk about challenges that foster deeper conversations.



Anfar, S. (2018, November 15). Five Principles of Ethical Leadership. Retrieved from https://medium.com/@anfar.shafreen/five-principles-of-ethical-leadership-218eccbb4918

Source: Miranti, Riyana, and Evans, Mark. "Trust, Sense of Community, and Civic Engagement: Lessons from Australia." Journal of Community Psychology, vol. 47, no. 2, 2019, pp. 254–271.

5

PRINCIPLE #3: Build Trust

If honesty is the single most important building block of community engagement, then "trust" is a chief cornerstone.

TRUST is the rock upon which the weight of the entire relationship rests.

Be transparent about objectives, goals, and budgets at the onset of any community engagement initiative. This helps create an environment of openness and respect.



Circle of Trust. (n.d.). Retrieved 04/12/2021, from https://lead2goals.com/circle-oftrust/#:~:text=CIRCLE%200F%20TRUST%20As%20a%20part%20of%20our,of%20 relationships%20that%20lead%20to%20accomplishing%20organizational%20goals.



Source: Di Napoli, Immacolata, et al. "Community Trust: A Social Indicator Related to Community Engagement." Social Indicators Research, vol. 145, no. 2, 2019, pp. 551–579." Miranti, Riyana, and Evans, Mark. "Trust, Sense of Community, and Civic Engagement: Lessons from Australia." Journal of Community Psychology, vol. 47, no. 2, 2019, pp. 254–271.



PRINCIPLE #4: Make Connections

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." – Margaret J. Wheatley

Making connections goes beyond simply networking with people. Connect to what people care about; connect to their hopes and dreams.

Identify opportunities to engage communities in shared learning where diverse perspectives, cultures, and experiences can help break down barriers and biased ideas about others.

It's important to connect the assets that already exist in any community by leveraging:

- The skills and resources of its individuals
- The power of voluntary associations and other community organizations
- Local institutions, the physical infrastructure of the community, and the local economy



Research shows that Strong Communities exist in all economic, rural, and urban areas because of their assets.

Source: White House Council on Strong Cities, Strong Communities, April 2013



PRINCIPLE #5: Share Knowledge

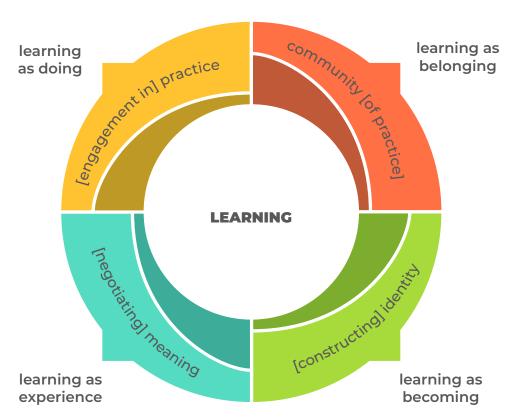
A community that learns together excels together. Form community groups that learn together.

Connecting people is fundamental to helping knowledge flow. Communities of Practice is a strategy to do so.

Community of Practice (CoP) is a forum for community members to connect. CoPs are a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who work together to fulfill individual and group goals.

They meet regularly to collaborate, share information, improve their technical skills, and work on advancing their common agenda as it relates to community improvement and transformation.

It is important to infuse CoPs with best practices, guiding principles, and strategies for collective learning.



@article Loyarte 2007 CommunitiesOP, Communities of practice: a model for their cultivation}, Edurne Loyarte and Olga Rivera, journal={J. Knowl. Manag., year 2007 volume 11, pages 67-77}

Source: Alford, Leslie Maurice. "Engagement in Dialogue: Tracing Our Connections or Speaking across the Space between?" Educational Philosophy and Theory, vol. 50, no. 5, 2018, pp. 448–454.



PRINCIPLE #6: Engaging Voices

"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities." – Stephen R. Covey

Why it's crucial to have all voices at the table

A growing body of research shows that a key indicator for real community transformation is the ability to make people feel heard. Giving everyone a share of voice is a critical step to tackle inequities and justice.

Start here:

SHARE OWNERSHIP OF DECISIONS – When the whole group is involved in making decisions, there is a stronger sense of accountability to the results and sustainability.

BUILDS TRUST – The level of trust and confidence grows when communities are able to speak up and actively engage in a transformative process.

GENERATE NEW IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING – When all voices are engaged, a collective and unique set of skills emerge. Diverse experiences propel solutions when addressing complex community issues.



Source: Alford, Leslie Maurice. "Engagement in Dialogue: Tracing Our Connections or Speaking across the Space between?" Educational Philosophy and Theory, vol. 50, no. 5, 2018, pp. 448–454.



PRINCIPLE #7: Work Together

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." – Henry Ford

•

Work to establish a clear vision and mission



Work to identify an action plan



Work to educate and empower the community



Work to address system-level change



Source: Bromage, Billy, et al. "Facilitating Community Connections among People with Mental Illnesses: Perspectives from Grassroots Community Leaders." Journal of Community Psychology, vol. 47, no. 3, 2019, pp. 663–678."

Ponton, Richard F. "Sharing Knowledge, Building Knowledge: The Journal as a Community of Practice." Journal of Mental Health Counseling, vol. 36, no. 4, 2014, pp. 283–287.



AND IT BEGINS BY KNOWING WHERE TO START.

Alliance brings together cross-sector leaders to create systemic change in marginalized communities.

ELEVATING COMMUNITIES REQUIRES ENGAGING ALL VOICES

There are many factors to creating real change in marginalized communities.

- Understanding the community culture
- Strategizing to have the biggest impact
- Collaborating with cross-sector leaders
- Building and sustaining core community relationships
- Discovering the root causes of issues beneath the symptoms

Contact Alliance today to GET STARTED. Schedule A Call: (817) 835-0271

STAY UP TO DATE – <u>Subscribe</u> to our blog and receive toolkits, informational e-blasts, and event notifications.

FOLLOW US @ - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube

INQUIRE – <u>Schedule</u> a free consultation.

Click Here for more resources.



eBook Sponsored by

