

# Thoughts and Considerations on Community Engagement

Glen Nowak, Ph.D.

Senior Health Communication Specialist

National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



“Involving the community and collaborating with its members are cornerstones of efforts to improve public health.”

Principles of Community Engagement, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# Community Engagement – Be Mindful of the Landscape

- Lots of topics and issues competing for public attention
  - Transportation, education, environment, health, etc.
  - Some state, some local, some federal – many cross jurisdictions
- Competing priorities, strongly held beliefs/interests
- Often much interest by government agencies, elected officials in accessing and/or using “community engagement”
  - But goals and objectives can vary significantly
  - Goals and objectives may not clear, especially at start
  - Stakeholders, affected populations, the public – which one(s)?
- Often much interest in using coalitions for “community engagement” – which is good, but. . .

# Be Mindful of Assumptions Potentially Being Made Regarding Coalitions

- Coalitions have broad, deep access to . . .
  - People we're interested in reaching, engaging
  - Most/many of the influential people we're interested in reaching, engaging
  - “The public” or affected populations
- Using a coalition will . . .
  - Enable us to (more) quickly get input from \_\_\_\_\_
  - Help us build/achieve consensus or support faster
  - Minimize opposition or criticism

# Be Mindful of Assumptions Potentially Being Made Regarding “Community Engagement”

- “It will provide us with information and insights into what the public believes or thinks” on \_\_\_\_\_
- “This will help us get the views and perspectives of people who are ‘neutral’ or who don’t care much about the issue.”
- “This will enable us to determine which direction to go, what option is best.”
  - Note: Expert vs. non-expert decision making
- “If we can find/use a coalition, this shouldn’t (cost too much/take too much time/require a lot of work)”

Doing Effective Community  
Engagement – Some Strategies and  
Tips for Success

# Initial Considerations (1):

## What do you mean by “community”

- People living in a geographic region
- People for whom something (e.g., vaccination) is or may be recommended
- Stakeholders or potential stakeholders
- Parents/guardians of infants/young children
- Groups, people, organizations that are, or could be expected to be interested and involved on issue
- Voters, taxpayers, policy makers or influencers
- Something else?

## Initial Considerations (2) – What do you mean by “engagement”?

- Get people to a meeting, workshop, discussion session or event (or series of meetings/events)
- Focused discussion on a topic or set of issues
  - By those of mostly like mind, perspective
  - By those with potentially highly divergent perspectives
  - By neither of above? By both of the above?
- Getting input, views, opinions, suggestions
- Active involvement on an issue (e.g., education and outreach efforts, fundraising)
- “Polling”

# Initial Considerations (3) – Why do you need or want to do “community engagement?”

- Increase visibility and/or the priority for something
- Educate (e.g., the public, stakeholders or potential stakeholders)
- Inform decision making and/or decision makers
  - Help identify potential options or courses of actions on a topic or issues
  - Help identify where people or organizations stand, what they think regarding an issue or topic (e.g., “range of views”)
- Foster implementation of something
  - Help build, achieve broader consensus for something (e.g., current or new public investment, current or proposed policy)
  - Promote, foster broader support for something (e.g., current or new public investment, current or proposed policy)
- Overcome opposition or apathy for something

## Or alternatively. . .

A community engagement continuum:

- Outreach
- Consult
- Involve
- Collaborate
- Shared leadership

# Initial Considerations (4) – What will or does success look like?

- Helpful input/views have been obtained from. . .
  - people, entities believed to be important
  - people/parties not usually engaged
  - a wide(r) range of entities, people
- Potential next steps or options will be identified
- Greater understanding among/by \_\_\_\_\_ re: \_\_\_\_\_
- “Consensus” or what appears to be external agreement (by stakeholders, affected populations) regarding way forward, next steps
- Support– or better support-- for planned or likely action(more, stronger, broader)

# Surfacing Vaccination-related Values: Public and Meningococcal Vaccines for Infants

- Safety
- Choice – ability to choose, having options
- Awareness (of licensed vaccines)
- Access/affordability (of licensed vaccines)
- Availability (e.g., permissive recommendations shouldn't inhibit access or affordability)
- Equity
  - Parents: all parents get same information, options
  - Providers: unless medically indicated, all children should be treated the same

# Three Concluding Thoughts

- Desire/interest in engaging with “communities” is likely to increase in the public health domain
  - Broader representation
  - Efficient and cost effective ways
- There will be roles, interest in using, coalitions in these efforts
  - Experience in bringing people, organizations together
  - Access to groups, people that are important to engage
- Doing engagement and using the “results” may add complexity and challenges – not reduce them

**Thanks**