Thoughts and Considerations on Community Engagement

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

Principles of Community Engagement, 2nd 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