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Contact: Janice Barbee, [janicegwb@yahoo.com](mailto:janicegwb@yahoo.com) or Theresa Gardella, [tgardella@nexuscp.org](mailto:tgardella@nexuscp.org)

## DISTINGUISH YOUR WORK: OUTREACH OR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT? AN ASSESSMENT TOOL

Written by:

Building the Field of Community Engagement partners and Tracy Babler

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We encourage you to share your feedback with us and tell us how you are using the tools and documents on our comment page at [www.buildthefield.org](http://www.buildthefield.org).

The partners in the Building the Field of Community Engagement initiative intend these documents and tools to introduce practitioners, funders, evaluators and community members to community engagement, to give the field clarity in its language and principles. However, community engagement is not a field that can rely on written materials alone; it takes a community of experienced practitioners to support people new to the field in practicing community engagement effectively, meeting its challenges, and tapping the strengths within each unique context. We encourage you to seek out experienced practitioners to support you in implementing these tools, principles and concepts.

The partners in Building the Field of Community Engagement are available for consultation. Please contact us at [www.buildthefield.org](http://www.buildthefield.org) or email Janice Barbee at [janicegwb@yahoo.com](mailto:janicegwb@yahoo.com).



**Building the Field of Community Engagement** is a collaborative initiative designed to magnify and elevate the power of community engagement to change the way problems are solved and resources are invested. Building the Field is bolstering the work of community engagement practitioners and encouraging other organizations to integrate community engagement into their work. As part of the project, the partners produced a film, *Community at the Center*, which discusses the core principles and values of this important work. They also host the Engaged Learning Series, which are community conversations on critical community engagement topics. This report is part of a series of tools and stories that document the partners' and other practitioners' expertise and learning. Find us at [www.buildthefield.org](http://www.buildthefield.org).

**Building the Field partners:**

- Casa de Esperanza
- Cultural Wellness Center
- Hope Community
- Lyndale Neighborhood Association
- Native American Community Development Institute
- Nexus Community Partners

# DISTINGUISH YOUR WORK: OUTREACH OR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT? AN ASSESSMENT TOOL

Community engagement is a process that promotes the participation of residents in community life, especially those who are excluded and isolated, by engaging them in collective action to create a healthy community. It is a fluid and dynamic process with the power to impact multiple systems and to create lasting community change.

The Building the Field of Community Engagement partners believe community engagement is important because it builds power by supporting people in changing their lives and in joining together to change their communities. It is a people-driven process built upon true relationships, with the goal of developing long-term leadership. Engagement can help an individual or a community to achieve a specific goal, but the engagement itself is also an outcome.



“The goal of this self-assessment tool is to identify what is community engagement and what isn’t—distinguishing it from other types of work,” said Lyndale Neighborhood Association’s Jennifer Arnold (bottom right). “We want this tool to be flexible enough to recognize that there are times when we are working on both sides of this spectrum.”



Above:  
Participants at the Engaged Learning Series event spent time assessing their own work and helping to shape the tool found on pages 3-5.

The Building the Field partners worked with other community engagement practitioners through a series of Engaged Learning events over a period of several months to design a tool that would help individuals and organizations understand where their work lands on a continuum of engagement and promote the appropriate use of the term “community engagement.” Recognizing that there are many gray areas in the measurement of community engagement, participants developed this tool to allow for a thorough, yet nuanced, exploration of what it means to do this work.

### THERE ARE MANY WAYS PRACTITIONERS AND ORGANIZATIONS CAN USE THIS TOOL:

- As an individual, to assess your strengths and areas for professional growth.
- With the staff in your organization to see where there is agreement, disagreement or tensions about your community engagement efforts.
- With board members to begin or deepen a conversation about community engagement within your organization.
- With new staff or board members to assess what skills they can contribute to your efforts to engage your community.
- To assess where an external partnership could improve community engagement by closing a gap posed by the limitations of your organization.
- To identify where staff or board members require new knowledge or training.
- To glean lessons learned after an event, project or initiative.
- With potential partners (government agencies, other nonprofits, community institutions, etc.) to assess whether your approaches are complementary.
- With community members, to assess how they see your work.

Every organization has the capacity to do community engagement. Resource limitations can impact the ability to do this work, but commitment and creativity are the only real requirements. We encourage you to use this assessment tool without judgment of yourself or others within your organization. We offer the tool as a guide to help ourselves and our fellow practitioners grow in our understanding of community engagement and to be thoughtful about our own practice of engagement techniques. We encourage you to seek out experienced practitioners as necessary to support you in implementing these principles and concepts. The partners in Building the Field of Community Engagement are available for consultation.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

As of December 19, 2014

Q: WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO YOU HAVE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• Relationships are primarily <b>TRANSACTIONAL</b> , for the purpose of completing a project.						• Relationships are <b>FOUNDATIONAL</b> , continually built between and among people and groups. Staff/institutions continually build the relationships they need to know their community.
• Relationships are often <b>NOT INCLUSIVE</b> of all racial or cultural groups in the community.						• Relationships reflect the <b>DIVERSITY</b> within the community.
• Relationships can be <b>LIMITED</b> to a few community members, often giving influence to those with the loudest voices.						• Relationships are built not just with current leaders, but also with people with an interest and/or <b>POTENTIAL TO BE LEADERS</b> .
• Relationships are <b>SHORT-TERM</b> , so staff have to rebuild them as other projects or issues come up.						• Relationships are transformational and <b>LONG-TERM</b> , so community leaders/members can engage in projects and issues as they come up.
Q: WHY ARE YOU ENGAGING PEOPLE?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• To accomplish a project or a <b>SPECIFIC GOAL</b> defined by the organization.						• To create space for people to <b>CONNECT, RAISE CONCERNS, BUILD POWER</b> and <b>ACT IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS</b> .
• To <b>SEEK BUY-IN OR APPROVAL</b> of something the organization has already planned.						• To <b>CREATE SPACE</b> for the community's assets to be recognized and utilized.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Q: HOW ARE YOU GETTING PEOPLE INVOLVED? WHEN?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary activities with community include <b>FLYERING, SURVEYS, FOCUS GROUPS, WORKSHOPS</b>, etc.</li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary activities with community include <b>LISTENING SESSIONS, ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS, CELEBRATIONS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROJECTS</b>, etc.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information is given or feedback is requested <b>AFTER A PROJECT IS PLANNED.</b></li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning is done <b>WITH THE COMMUNITY</b> from the beginning</li> </ul>
Q: HOW DO IDEAS GET GENERATED?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>STAFF/ INSTITUTIONS GENERATE IDEAS</b> they think the community will support.</li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff/institutions <b>SUPPORT COMMUNITY MEMBERS</b> in generating their own ideas.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff/institutions generate <b>SOLUTIONS TO A PROBLEM</b> they have defined.</li> </ul>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff/institutions engage in <b>CONTINUAL SELF-REFLECTION</b> to respond to and incorporate people's ideas, feedback, talents, and challenges into the work.</li> </ul>

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Q: HOW DO YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL POLICIES AND STRUCTURES SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT?						
OUTREACH	UNSURE WHICH WE ARE DOING	DOING PRIMARILY OUTREACH	BEGINNING TO TALK ABOUT MOVING TO CE	WORKING TOWARD CE	DOING CE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
• The organizational culture is primarily focused on <b>OBTAINING SPECIFIC OUTCOMES</b> .						• The organizational culture is focused on learning and it values <b>EMERGENT AND LONG-TERM OUTCOMES</b> .
• Board and staff may <b>NOT REPRESENT</b> the community.						• Board and staff <b>REFLECT</b> the community.
• The organization <b>ADHERES TO WAYS OF OPERATING</b> that reflect the <b>DOMINANT CULTURE</b> , such as using Robert's Rules for meetings, prioritizing staff to speak, etc.						• The organization <b>CREATES SPACE FOR DIFFERENT CULTURAL WAYS</b> , such as offering cultural foods and social spaces/ times, giving elders a special role, etc.
• Racism and power may not be discussed or may be <b>DEALT WITH SUPERFICIALLY</b> .						• The organizational culture supports discussions to <b>UNDERSTAND AND DISMANTLE</b> structural racism, to help heal historical trauma and to claim individual and community power.
• The organization adheres to <b>ORGANIZATION-DRIVEN</b> policies and structures.						• The organization demonstrates a willingness to revisit organizational policies and structures to <b>RESPOND TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AND IDEAS</b> .

## Questions to ask yourself or discuss as a group after completing your assessment:

- Why did you rank yourself or your organization as you did?
- Where do differences exist between your individual work and the overall work of the organization?
- What would you and/or your organization like to do differently?
- Do your responses align with your organization's mission? What changes could advance your mission?
- Where does the staff or board of the organization agree? Disagree? Where is there tension?
- Where does your organization need additional support?
- Where do you need to build the capacity of your organization?
- What are the opportunities for and challenges to doing community engagement?





# PARTNERS

**CASA DE ESPERANZA** is a national organization that puts community engagement at the strategic center of its local and national work to mobilize Latinas and Latin communities to end domestic violence. [www.casadeesperanza.org](http://www.casadeesperanza.org)

**THE CULTURAL WELLNESS CENTER** convenes and engages cultural communities to rediscover the power of culture and document this process for the redevelopment and healing of individuals, families and communities. [www.ppcwc.org](http://www.ppcwc.org)

**HOPE COMMUNITY** is a housing and community engagement organization that engages hundreds of diverse kids and adults each year to build stronger futures for themselves and their community through leadership, learning, organizing and community building. [www.hope-community.org](http://www.hope-community.org)

**LYNDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION** is a diverse, community-driven organization that brings people together to work on common issues to ensure all community members live, work and play in a safe, vibrant and sustainable community. [www.lyndale.org](http://www.lyndale.org)

**THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE** focuses on building a vibrant and thriving Native community through engagement, organizing and development work. [www.nacdi.org](http://www.nacdi.org)

**NEXUS COMMUNITY PARTNERS** is a community building intermediary that supports initiatives and organizations advancing sustainable change by promoting community engagement and asset and wealth building. [www.nexuscp.org](http://www.nexuscp.org)

*Please contact any of the organizations above if you'd like support developing or strengthening your community engagement work.*

To join the Building the Field partners in learning more about this dynamic, challenging field, please watch the short film on community engagement, *Community at the Center*, and attend the next Engaged Learning event. Please visit <http://nexuscp.org/our-work/building-the-field-of-community-engagement/> for details. For more information, contact Janice Barbee at [janicegwb@yahoo.com](mailto:janicegwb@yahoo.com) or Theresa Gardella at [tgardella@nexuscp.org](mailto:tgardella@nexuscp.org).