

**Building Knowledge of Your Community Around An Issue:  
A Critical Step Toward Advancing the Common Good**

**UWA Community Leaders Conference, May 15, 2008**

**Common Barriers to Participation:**

- ❖ Apathy
- ❖ Distrust
- ❖ Frustration
- ❖ So many meetings, so little time
- ❖ Lack of leadership, big and small “L”
- ❖ Communication/language
- ❖ Hidden rules
- ❖ Logistics: transportation, child care
- ❖ Not thinking it matters

**Models of Participation:**

- ❖ There from the start
- ❖ Community advisory groups
- ❖ Ongoing
- ❖ Short-term/focus groups
- ❖ “Channel”/champion strategy
- ❖ Partner with local groups
- ❖ Find and work with community “bridges”
- ❖ Summits and events
- ❖ Get out there!

**Our short list of key success factors:**

- ❖ Don't try to force the outcome. Engage people as a way to learn from them. If you have a preconceived outcome in mind, you may not hear what people are really saying.
- ❖ 2-way mentoring
- ❖ Stipends for consumers
- ❖ Critical mass of diversity. One person should not be representing an entire group.
- ❖ Accessible content. Pay attention to language, jargon, words that may mean different things to different people/groups.
- ❖ Clear time horizon. Give people the sense that their engagement will result in change.
- ❖ WITH, not just ABOUT, the community
- ❖ Partnership, not just participation
- ❖ Diverse viewpoints lead to new solutions
- ❖ Lots of work, but “the right work”
- ❖ Make it someone's and everyone's job. Engaging the community is hard work and takes significant capacity to accomplish well.

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