

Tips for *ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITIES* to Identify Shared Goals and Critical Issues

- ❖ Surveys and adding up input ARE NOT community engagement. Community engagement means having conversations with people to listen and learn.
- ❖ Engaging people in decision-making processes is different than engaging people to learn and build knowledge. Don't confuse the two. The latter helps with the former.
- ❖ Engage the community even if you think you know what they are going to say.
- ❖ Invite people to meetings as members of the community to think about the needs of the community, NOT as advocates for a particular agency. Be clear about this. Consider having meetings outside of standard work hours so people aren't there on "the company dime."
- ❖ Engage people who are likely to benefit from your initiatives – members of populations of concern.
- ❖ Be authentic. If you're there to learn, that's great, but if you're there to get buy-in on a decision that's already been made, make sure people know that.
- ❖ Be transparent. It's OK to say you aren't sure, you don't know, and you're struggling with a problem. Engage people honestly in helping you find solutions.
- ❖ Partner on community engagement with people and organizations you think will be your partners in planning and deliver on resulting initiatives. This makes the effort a partnership from the beginning.
- ❖ Make sure you leave time to sit down with colleagues and partners to think about what you are hearing from the community. Don't let your engagement turn into just another activity!
- ❖ Incorporate what you are learning into your planning and decision making and let the community know how their concerns have affected your work. If you don't deliberately make time and set up a plan to do this, it WILL NOT happen!