Framework for Community Engagement

Developed by the Joint Community Engagement Framework Sub-Group for the East and Downtown East Toronto Ontario Health Teams

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Community engagement is not just a set of activities and methods confined to a particular project, policy, or process. Rather, it is a way of communication, decision making, and governance that gives community members the power to own the change they want to see, leading to equitable outcomes. – Policy Link

Introduction

This Community Engagement Framework has been developed through a collaborative approach with individuals representing various community leaders and patient representatives from the East and Downtown East Ontario Health Teams (OHT), via the establishment of a joint Community Engagement Sub-Group.

As inclusion of patient, family and care partner perspectives and opportunities for patient partnership and community engagement is recommended throughout the discovery, development and submission stages of OHT applications, this framework aims to assist partners to plan and undertake effective community engagement. The framework builds on best practices and previous work completed in this area, and includes specific recommendations on how to best involve community members as partners in the planning and design of an integrated care model for the OHT.

Effective community engagement for the purposes of health system planning is about trust, relationship building and collaboration. One of the goals of this framework is to ensure that community members are provided with meaningful and accessible opportunities for engagement that leverage existing strengths and assets within the community.

For the purposes of this framework, "OHT Community Members" refers to patients, clients, care partners, members of the public and the diverse communities within a region, including grassroots agencies, cultural or ethno-specific groups and tenant/neighbourhood associations.

This framework outlines a consistent approach to community engagement, providing guidance on when and how to undertake engagement activities and what steps and processes should be considered. The framework is meant to be viewed as a best practice guide for how to engage OHT Community Members to design the strategic, policy or operational aspects of the OHT integrated care model.

Foundational Documents

As part of this process, the Framework Sub-Group completed an environmental scan of available resources. This framework draws on the following foundational documents and resource banks:

Community Health Ontario
Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement
Health Quality Ontario
"Principles of Community Engagement" CDC
"Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities," *Policy Link*
"Engaging Queenslanders: A guide to community engagement methods and techniques" *Queensland Dep't of Communities*
"Engaging communities for health improvement" *The Health Foundation*

"Beyond the Usual Suspects: Towards Inclusive User Involvement" *Shaping our Lives*
"Patient Engagement: Heard and Valued" *Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement*

Guiding Principles

These principles were developed by the Framework Sub-Group to guide effective community engagement activities within the OHT planning context, by building community partnerships, trusting relationships and sustainable meaningful engagement. It is important to note that the chart below provides examples associated with the principles but this is not an exhaustive list.

Principle	Examples for OHT Planning Process
1. Incorporate opportunities to engage with OHT Community Members at all levels of participation and planning	→ Provide clarity for participating OHT Community Members at outset of process by communicating the purpose of the engagement activity and where it fits within larger planning process
2. Build capacity for OHT Community Members to continue their ongoing participation through meaningful engagement activities	→ Offer training and development opportunities for OHT Community Members to build leadership skills, establish network connections and help secure grant funding opportunities
3. Recognize and address barriers to equitable participation in engagement opportunities	→ Adopt equitable approaches when communicating out to participants (door-to-door outreach, etc.) → Consider a range of engagement formats and tools → Include decision framework for how to recognize contributions and compensate participants accordingly and transparently → Supporting resource: Budgeting for Engagement
4. Use co-design frameworks and tools to guide engagement planning	→ Leverage past and current co-design activities underway → Supporting resource: Experience-based co-design toolkit
5. Prioritize health planning based on needs identified by OHT Community Members	→ Consider participatory needs assessments and asset mapping activities with OHT Community Members → Supporting resource: Participatory needs assessment
6.Use equity-informed lens that reflects social determinants of health when considering population health data for health system planning	→ Conduct a deep dive into population data to understand full range of community members' health experiences/participation
7. Leverage knowledge and experience across the continuum of the OHT Community	→ Involve community members, service users, and multiple service providers including health, social services, community services, grassroots organizations and institutional partners.
8. Be transparent about the constraints and scope of influence	→ Let participants know at outset the level of influence or authority your organization has to implement changes

9. Maintain ongoing communication and report-back to OHT Community Members	→ Commit to a feedback loop at the beginning, and follow through. After gaining information or advice from participants, tell or show them what you did, or didn't do, with it, and tell them why → Commit to shared learning and joint problem solving
10. Ensure accountability and performance measurement/evaluation processes are in place that include the opportunity for feedback and reporting back to Community Members	→ Be mindful of best practices and ensure a measure of accountability and performance measurement is in practice which includes both an opportunity for feedback and a reporting back to all engaged stakeholders at all levels → Use these performance measurements to grow and develop and meet the collaborative objectives

Levels of Community Engagement

For the East Toronto and Downtown East Toronto OHT, community engagement is a continuum that is captured in Figure 1, source: Principles of Community Engagement, 2nd Edition

Figure 1: Levels of Community Engagement

Inform	Community receives information and announcements on topics of interest or concerns to the community.
Consult	Community is consulted on draft plans, policy, planning or on issues; feedback impacts decisions.
Involve	Work directly with the community to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.
Collaborate	Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.
Shared Leadership	Community identifies issues, solutions and actions-system supports. To place final decision making in the hands of the community.

Steps for Community Engagement

The following six steps were developed by the Framework Sub-Group to guide OHT partners who are engaging patients, care partners and other community members in planning activities. Each level of engagement in Figure 1 requires a different approach and strategy for engaging with the community. As such, OHT partners will need to plan and identify the appropriate steps for a successful and meaningful engagement activity. The process captured here includes tools for consensus building and collaborative planning.

Figure 2: Steps for Community Engagement

Step 1: Pre-design

Design your initial strategy or plan based on desired outcome recognizing this is an initial plan that will develop and change during the process based on feedback and engagement at all level by all stakeholders affected by the mandated outcomes. Pre-design activities may also be informed by ongoing reporting and performance evaluation of past and current engagement activities and key lessons learned.

Step 2: Setting objectives

At the beginning of any engagement process, it is important to ensure that the objectives are clearly defined, the scope of the project is defined and the level of engagement is determined based on the following considerations:

→ Who is sponsoring this engagement activity?
→ What do you want the engagement to achieve?

→ What are the questions you would like the engagement activities to answer?
→ Have all project sponsors reached consensus on the objectives of the engagement?
→ What level of engagement is appropriate? (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Shared Leadership)

This working group is recommending and adaption of The Engagement Continuum Tool, which has been created by the Tamarack Institute to support OHT partners to collectively determine the level of engagement (may be adapted to reflect the levels of engagement in Figure 1). The Engagement Continuum Tool, in brief, requires the assembled group to identify engagement levels using interactive activity. Facilitators who are leading the discussion should end the discussion by using any of these questions to debrief with the group to help drive consensus and inform future work:

→ What additional information do different groups require and who should they hear it from?
→ Do we have this information? If not, where can we find it?
→ How might we measure and monitor levels of engagement for our project?

Step 3: Identifying stakeholders

It is important to identify all groups and individuals within the community who will be affected or have an interest in the decision being made. In order to develop a comprehensive list of stakeholders, the following steps may be useful:
→ Ask key members of the community and other identified stakeholders who they think might be interested
→ Call for expressions of interest or consider advertising in local papers and other media
→ Identify any hard-to-reach groups who may be impacted by outcomes – special consideration should be given on how to engage these sections of our community

When undertaking your stakeholder analysis it is important to ask:
→ What are the key issues or areas of interest for the project?
→ Who are the key stakeholder groups?
→ What is their level of interest?
→ Who are the key contacts for the stakeholder groups?

One tool that is particularly useful for identifying stakeholder is The Community Reference System that has been created by the Tamarack Institute as part of the resources supporting teams involved with OHTs. It is a process that identifies in a highly participatory way to engage a community.

Step 4: Determining the tool(s)

Based on the project resources, level of engagement and stakeholders, the project team will select the most appropriate tool or method. The following chart provides examples of tools and methods for small-scale and large-scale community engagement, based on the needs and objectives of the project and available budget/resources.

Figure 3: Tools for Community Engagement

Tool	When and how to use?	Level of Engagement	Considerations for OHT Partners	Target Participants
Advisory committees; Neighbourhood/ community committees	When you need consistent input or advice over a period of time from people who have good local knowledge	Consult; Involve	→ Time consuming to recruit local residents → Need effective and committed community members → Need a good facilitator and Terms of Reference	General public; Patients and care partners; Local providers

Method	When to use	Level	Considerations	Audience
Action planning events (e.g. forums or workshops)	When you need to produce plans of action that are owned by those affected by them or who will implement them	Involve; Collaborate	→ Need to be structured and carefully planned → Need a good facilitator to lead the process	Local providers; OHT partners
Fact sheets; Information sheets	When you need to provide consistent accurate information on aspects of a project, policy or change	Inform	→ Written information needs to be clear, jargon free and illustrated where possible → Important to have any written material translated for particular groups	General public; Patients and care partners
Focus groups	When you need to generate discussions to elicit people's perceptions, feelings and opinions about an issue	Consult	→ Timing and neutral venue are critical to ensure participation. → Skilled facilitator who allows all members of the group to participate → Reimbursement for travel may be needed	General public; Patients and care partners; Local providers; OHT partners
Experience based co-design	When you need to engage various stakeholders (patients, caregivers and service providers) to co-design services and/or care pathways, together in partnership	Involve; Collaborate; Shared Leadership	→ This process requires skilled people to lead this type of engagement. → Establish a core group, collecting staff and patients' experiences, setting up a co-design event, making changes and celebrating success	General public; Patients and care partners; Local providers; OHT partners
Patient journey mapping	When you need to understand what individuals experience through the entire patient journey	Consult; Involve; Collaborate	→ Create a safe space for people to open up about personal experiences → When inviting people to participate in the mapping, be open about the purposes and process of journey mapping	Patients and care partners; OHT partners
In-depth interviews	When you need to discuss complex or sensitive issues	Consult	→ Requires skilled interviewers → Carried out on a one-to-one basis, over a period of one half to 2 hrs	General public; Local providers; Patients and care partners
Questionnaires and surveys	When you need to obtain specific structured responses on specific issues to obtain quantitative information. Surveys can be conducted by post, internet, e-mail, face-to-face or telephone	Consult	→ Good for obtaining the views of large numbers of people and results can be analyzed relatively quickly → Less effective in obtaining responses to complex issues → Mail surveys provide poor response rate → Important to have any written material translated for particular groups or have interpreters in different languages	General public; Local providers; Patients and care partners
Newsletters	When you need to keep people regularly informed about progress of a community initiative or long-term project	Inform	→ Newsletters can be printed and distributed by mail or electronically by email or posted in the Internet → Requires the establishment and maintenance of a database → Requires good writing/design as well illustrations and photographs → Important to have any written material translated for particular groups	Patients and care partners
Open houses	When you need to present ideas or plans to a broad cross-section of stakeholders in an area to obtain responses in an informal forum	Inform; Consult	→ Need well illustrated displays that convey accurate information → Need staff available to take questions, discuss ideas and gauge reactions	General public; Local providers; Patients and care partners

Community workshops	When you need to generate discussion and insights on aspects of a program or project from a known group of stakeholders	Involve; Collaborate	→ Need to set a clear agenda and have a facilitator who can keep the group on track → May need to reimburse group members for travel and offer meals/refreshments if the workshop lasts longer than 2 hours	Patients and care partners; Local providers; OHT partners
Action research; Participatory research	When staff want to explore issues, difficulties and experiences in a collaborative and participative way with clients. Action research involves a repeated process of identifying a problem, action planning, action taking, evaluating and identifying findings	Involve; Collaborate	→ Can be incorporated into everyday work as part of a responsive approach → Can be used for any groups and is appropriate for socially excluded groups	Patients and care partners
Community representation and coalitions	When you want representatives of community groups to join a policy or strategy group. This generally involves attending meetings, representing their group's views and providing input into the development, implementation and evaluation of strategies.	Collaborate; Shared Leadership	→ Give representatives the capacity, knowledge and time to both represent their group and participate effectively → Consider meeting times, travel arrangements and expenses	General public; Local providers; Patients and care partners

Step 5: Planning the scope

Project scope, timelines and budget for community engagement will vary and dependent on a number of factors, including the level of engagement, community participation required and the community engagement tools and techniques chosen for each stakeholder group. Questions for consideration include:

→ What is the project deliverable?
→ What is in scope for this project?
→ What is the timeline for the project deliverables?

Generally speaking, the higher the level of impact and more stakeholders you have, the more time and resources will need to be allocated to community engagement. Therefore, it is essential that a community engagement plan is developed before commencing the work.

It is essential that the community engagement plan includes a period of informing the community about the issues at hand, before consulting, involving or collaborating.

An important factor in determining timeframes will be key community events such as holidays, religious festivals and other major events. Where possible these should be avoided in order to maximize the ability for people to participate.

When considering budget and resource allocation, the type of engagement tools chosen will be a significant factor. Each tool requires different levels of staff skill, time and budget.

One of the recommended tools for OHT Partners is Budgeting for Engagement.

Step 6: Reporting and evaluation

Providing feedback and reporting to the community is essential part of effective community engagement. When developing an engagement plan, identify at which points throughout the various engagements you will be providing feedback or reporting on progress. Once decisions have been made and implementation is underway, it is best practice to come back to the people who participated and report to them on the changes that have taken place

In order to maintain engagement and create confidence, community engagement sessions should be recorded, and minutes made available to participants as soon as possible. This will help ensure ongoing interest and allow participants to provide you with any feedback or corrections about what has been recorded.

It is important to remember to maintain privacy and confidentiality in all reporting and feedback provided. Participant names and identifying information should be removed unless you have the written consent of each individual to publish or release their personal information.

To assist with providing feedback the following steps should be undertaken:

→ Offer to capture contact details of all stakeholders and community members who would like to be involved or participate in an engagement process
→ Ensure that contact details are kept up to date throughout the project
→ Detail how and when each stakeholder group will receive feedback during the project and after completion
→ Ensure that feedback is accessible to all stakeholders
→ Ensure the privacy and confidentiality of individuals are maintained at all times