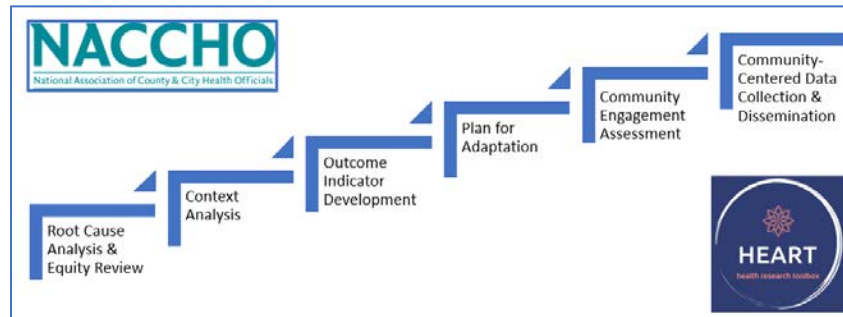


Health Equity Focused QRT Evaluation Profiles

Part 5: Community Engagement Assessment

This is the fifth of a series of blog posts that discuss the implementation of core components of a health equity workplan that was created by NACCHO (National Association of County & City Health Officials) and a Colorado-based consulting firm called HEART (Health Equity and Action Research Tools & Training for Transformation). The core components of a are listed in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1: Core Components of a Health Equity Workplan



In Michigan, The Michigan Overdose Data to Action (MODA) program is endeavoring to use these core components to evaluate our quick response teams (QRTs). Accordingly, MODA is integrating these components into its QRT evaluation profiles, AKA **Health Equity Focused QRT Evaluation Profiles**. Over the course of FY22 and FY23, MODA has been implementing one core component per quarter. The program has already implemented the Root Cause Analysis and Equity Review component, the Context Analysis component, the Plan for Adaptation component, and the Outcome Indicator Development component. This OD2A Eval CoP blog is now introducing the Community Engagement Assessment component of the health equity workplan.

Authentic Community Engagement

Authentic community engagement is consistent and committed engagement over time with an affected community. Such engagement requires the creation of trust, transparency, vulnerability, and safety. When developing and implementing QRTs, we must approach our communities as partners and prioritize place, people, and practice.


Key ingredients to authentic engagement include an understanding that trust takes time and intentionality. It also requires an understanding of our own positionality and our biases. We must immerse ourselves, listen deeply, learn about the community's cultural and historical context, and practice intellectual humility.

Additionally, we need to address unique groups and their dynamics, and respect and appreciate diversity of viewpoints. Ideally, we would develop and implement QRTs together with the community; working with, not for; agreeing on process; and allocating resources equitably. Finally, we should use a strengths-based approach to working with communities, oriented towards resilience and strengths, rather than suffering and deficiencies. This would include recognizing the inherent wisdom within communities, including their experiences, skills, and expertise on their own lives.

Community Engagement Spectrum

To assess the QRT project teams' levels of authentic community engagement, we will use the Spectrum of Public Participation developed by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2). (See Exhibit 2.) To determine the level of engagement, it is helpful to consider the different activities and products that result from the engagement. When simply informing the community, the engagement results in the creation of a website, fact sheets, or flyers. When consulting the community, the engagement results in a survey study, focus group discussions, and/or townhall meetings. When involving the community, the engagement may result in workshops and/or facilitated dialogues. When collaborating with the community, the engagement may result in the establishment of a community advisory board and perhaps co-created products. Finally, when empowering a community, the engagement may result in a community-based task force, community organizing, and/or participatory budgeting.

Exhibit 2: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC		We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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As we consider this community engagement spectrum, we need to ask where our QRT project teams fall along the spectrum. How are our project teams involving the community in the products or activities they are creating or engaged in? We must also consider what it would require for our QRT project teams to move further along the spectrum towards collaboration and even empowerment. How would our project teams benefit from greater community engagement?

Action Plan for the MODA QRTs

We will be helping our MODA QRT project teams during the next set of quarterly meetings to consider their levels of community engagement, and what it would require for them to move further along the community engagement spectrum. In the meantime, I encourage you to jump in the conversation with any questions or comments you have about evaluating OD2A-funded activities through a health equity lens.