

THE CONTEXT EXPERTS:

How to authentically
engage people with lived
experience

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AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

Authentic community engagement is the intentional process of **co-creating solutions** in partnership with **people who know best**, through their own experiences, the barriers to opportunity.

CONTENT & CONTEXT EXPERTS

Content Experts are professionals, staff in your organization, service providers, and leaders with formal power who have the knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue.

Context Experts are community members who experientially know about the issue and feel the impact it has on their everyday lives. These are individuals who know the issue intimately and experience it day to day.

IDENTIFYING CONTEXT EXPERTS

Questions to ask:

- Who will be directly affected if the aim of this engagement is achieved?
- Who will be indirectly affected?
- Who wants to be involved?
- Who is already engaged or has contacted us about this issue?
- Are there existing community networks working on this issue?
- Who has real or perceived moral claims that could affect a decision process or outcome?
- Who is the respected voice on this issue?
- Who are the 'connectors' regarding this issue?

THE CONTEXT EXPERTS

IN PAIRS

SHARE






1. Who are your context experts?
2. What expertise do they bring?
3. What could go wrong by not involving them?

AN AUTHENTIC PROCESS

Questions to ask:

- Which decisions are we inviting the community to engage about?
- How will the process represent authentic engagement in shaping decisions?
- How will engagement activities be structured for optimum community learning, dialogue and creativity?
- What structures will we use to leverage as much input from and interaction among as many people as possible?
- Are there ways the community can add value to the ultimate and ongoing success of the effort?
- What success indicators will be used to assess the value of the effort?

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM

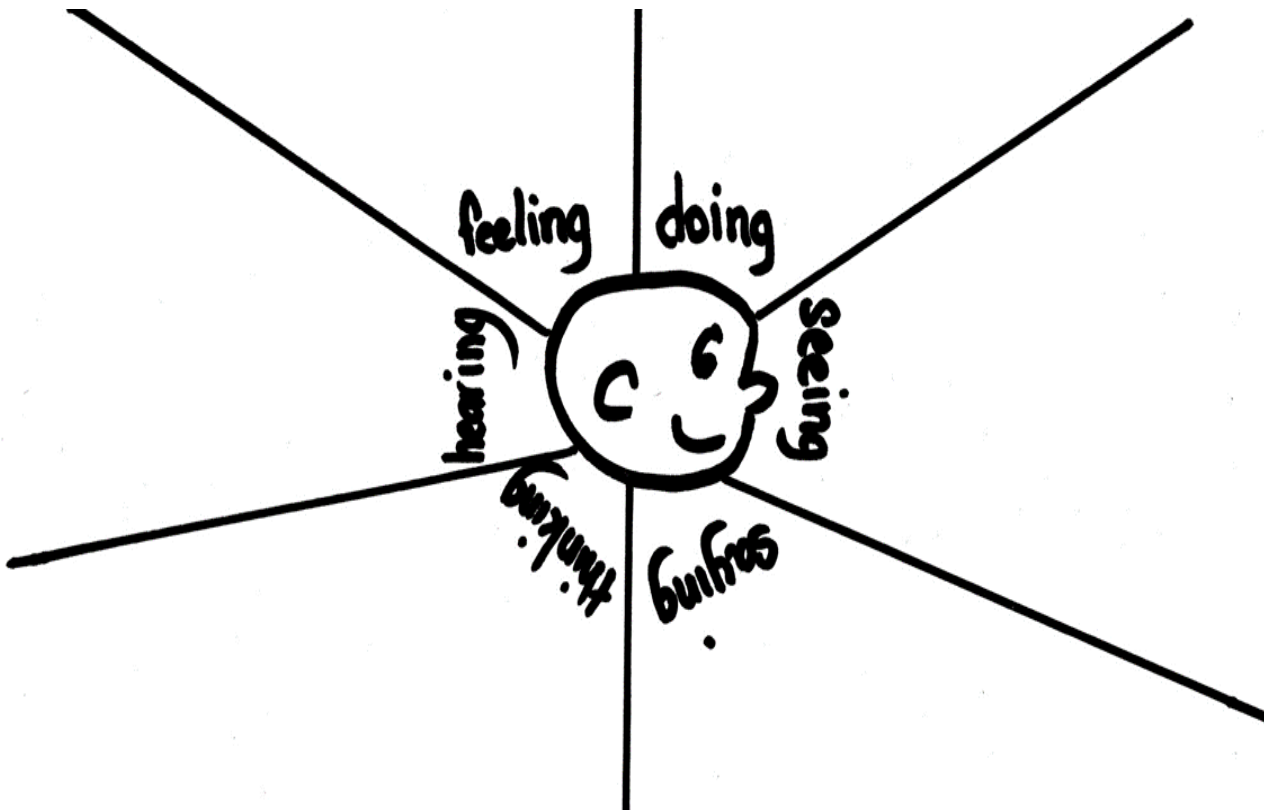
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
					
GOAL	To provide stakeholders with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives and solutions.	To obtain stakeholder feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of the decision from development to solution.	Shared leadership of community-led projects with final decision-making at the community level.
STYLE	"Here's what's happening."	"Here are some options, what do you think?"	"Here's a problem, what ideas do you have?"	"Let's work together to solve this problem."	"You care about this issue and are leading an initiative, how can we support you?"

Adaptation of the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum

“The price of participation
is contribution.”

~ Michael McAfee

TOOL: EMPATHY MAP



5 LESSONS

1. PROVIDE CONTEXT EXPERTS WITH THE OWNERSHIP & ABILITY TO SHAPE THE SOLUTION

It's important to understand the difference between buy-in and ownership.

- **Buy-In:** Someone else has developed the idea, made the decision, designed an action plan and then asks and needs the staff/citizens to approve it and/or implement it.
- **Ownership:** Front line staff/citizens develops the idea, makes the decisions, designs the action plan and acts on it.

THE CONTEXT EXPERTS

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2. ELEVATE THE VOICE OF THE CONTEXT EXPERT

Your role in designing authentic community engagement is to elevate the voice of context experts and advocate for their involvement in the work. Do this early in your planning, not when an issue arises.

THE CONTEXT EXPERTS

2. ELEVATE THE VOICE OF THE CONTEXT EXPERT

- Citizen Advisory Committees
- Workshops and Focus Groups
- Consensus Building
- Participatory Decision Making
- Large Group Meetings

- Document Co-creation
- Online Communities
- Open Spaces
- Working Groups & Study Circles

Consult



- Surveys
- Public Meetings
- Town Hall Council Meetings
- Public Comment (online, voicemail, comment boxes)
- Interviews
- Focus Groups

- Polls
- Online Forums
- Social Media Discussions
- Pop-ups
- Kitchen Table Talks

Involve



- Participatory Budgeting
- Community Coalition
- Asset-based Community Development
- Decision-making Platform

- Community Indicator Projects
- Ballots
- Citizen Juries
- Delegated Decision



Collaborate

- Workshops
- Deliberative Polling
- Crowd-sourcing
- Ideas & Ideation
- Mapping
- Digital Storytelling
- Design Charrette
- Mind-mapping
- Visioning

- Scenario Testing
- Citizens Panels
- Hackathons
- Participatory Budgeting
- Leadership Development



Empower

3. HONOUR & RECOGNIZE THE TIME & TALENT OF CONTEXT EXPERTS

Are content experts being compensated for their involvement? If so, recognize the importance of the contribution of context experts equally, and compensate them accordingly.

4. REMOVE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Barriers to participation include those that are physical, structural, procedural and emotional. Consider:

- Are meeting days and times most suitable for context experts? •
Are meeting venues accessible?
- Does documentation and resources use plain language?
- Is there flexibility within your agenda?
- Have you allowed time for relationship building and story sharing?
- Have you considered the power balance within the room?

5. AIM FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES, NOT TRANSACTIONAL ONES

Don't just see the context expert as a source of information, see them as a partner who has a stake in your work. Use an asset-based approach to figure out the strengths that each person brings and determine together how they can contribute meaningfully.

INDIVIDUAL
BRAINSTORM

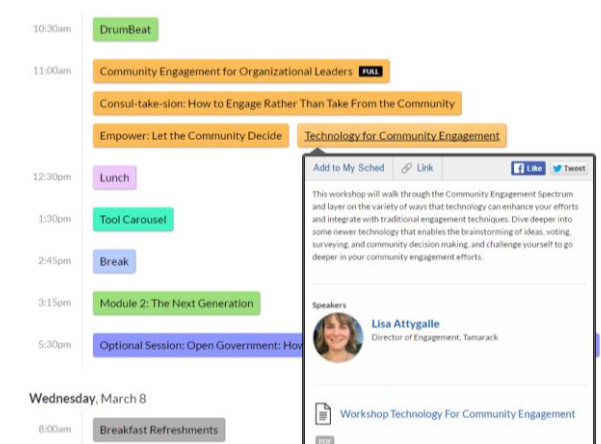
**What are the challenges
you've faced when engaging
context experts?**

THANKS!

GET EVENT RESOURCES

Access all event resources including PPTs and handouts.

<https://communitychangeinstitute2017.sched.com/>



STAY IN TOUCH

To access tools, resources, webinars, and to stay up to date with the latest in community change, visit:

www.tamarackcommunity.ca

