



Community engagement is a key building block of healthy communities. A widely quoted definition published in 1997 by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the first edition of [Principles of Community Engagement](#), refers to community engagement as:

“...the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people. It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its members. It often involves partnerships and coalitions that help mobilize resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices”.

LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

There are several levels of community engagement, which have been characterized differently by various authors. However, most referenced is [IAP2's Public Participation Spectrum](#) which depicts five levels that form a continuum of community engagement: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The continuum does not proceed in discrete levels; some community engagement processes may only involve one level, while others could include two or three levels at different times or in different events at the same time. This spectrum is a framework for different levels of engagement—not a hierarchy and meant to be utilized based on which level of engagement is most appropriate to the particular situation.

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The [Canada Health Council's Primer on Public Involvement](#) cites the following as key conditions for success:

- **Representativeness:** Participants must be representative of the population as much as possible.
- **Independence:** The public involvement process must be perceived as fair and independent in that everyone must have a chance to express themselves including those who hold diverging views.
- **Early involvement:** Participants should be involved as early as possible in the process.
- **Influence:** Participants must have a real impact on the decision-making process.
- **Providing information:** Information must be provided to allow time to learn, discuss, and deliberate. It must be clear, transparent, and easy to understand.
- **Resource accessibility:** Resources must be available to allow meaningful participation. Consider location, venue, timing, and travel support.
- **Structured decision-making:** The community involvement process must be legitimate, transparent, and official. Make sure objectives are realistic and communicated clearly. Have a feedback mechanism around input about decisions in place.

SOME USEFUL RESOURCES ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition [From the Ground up: An Organizing Handbook for Healthy Communities](#)

Tamarack Institute. [Community Engagement Resource Library](#)

Community Places. [Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement](#)

Social Planning and Research Council of BC. [Community Engagement Toolkit](#)

Centers for Disease Control, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. [Principles of Community Engagement](#)

Community Development Foundation. [Building healthy communities: A community empowerment approach](#)

McCue, L. (2018). [Community Engagement](#). HC Link

McCue, L and Stuart, T. (2016). [Civic Engagement: An essential ingredient of healthy communities](#). HC Link

iap² [International Association for Public Participation](#)



OHCC enables communities to create and sustain positive change through equitable community engagement, intersectoral partnerships, political commitment, healthy public policy, and asset-based community development. BCHC supports individual and collective health and well-being considered important aspects of community health.



BC Healthy Communities
People. Place. Potential.