

A TCDG Framework

It's always the people who are experiencing the most forms of discrimination who have the most insights into how to build the solution. -Chase Strangio, Lawyer & Transgender Rights Activist

Building meaningful connections with people in the communities you serve comes with many benefits. This includes the formation of new relationships, opportunities for collaboration, and innovative problem-solving. The wisdom and lived expertise of people who have been excluded can lead to better decision-making, more effective solutions to tough problems, and the emergence of new, more diverse leadership.

This document offers a framework to support individuals, groups, and organizations that wish to engage with those they serve (particularly people who are furthest from justice) in ways that are beneficial to the full community.

I. Center Relationships

With self	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Continue to develop your own understanding of social inequalities and oppression (race, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, class, etc.) and the impact of these issues.❖ Develop awareness and comfort speaking about your own identities, life experiences, and biases.❖ Build awareness of gaps in your understanding about how others experience the world.❖ Be open to learning more.❖ Be willing to be uncomfortable.
With others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Be clear about your intentions and what your hopes are for the relationship - what you can bring to it and what you hope to receive.❖ Prioritize building trust, communication, and mutual respect. This may take a period of time (even years) to develop and is a necessary foundation before making an ask or extending an invitation.❖ Go where people are and meet one-to-one or in small informal groups. Get to know people a bit. Share a meal. Find out what matters to them.❖ Remember that getting to know new people can feel uncomfortable.
With affinity groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Given the nature of systemic and internalized oppression, it can be helpful to support opportunities for people to meet in affinity groups (i.e. same ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) prior to joining a mixed group process. Affinity groups can provide a safe place to talk frankly about issues, prepare people to participate in a mixed group with more confidence, and provide an opportunity for people to receive support from peers.

II. Organize for Inclusion

Join or form a diverse organizing group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Join or form an organizing group that is diverse (consider race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.); include diversity relevant to the issue being addressed; and, include formal and informal community leaders.❖ Name power dynamics and privilege. Intentionally create group processes that actively encourage giving voice to groups that have been marginalized or excluded in the past. These can include establishing group norms and decision-making protocols that will address the issues.
Plan events that are useful to participants, balanced, and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ With the help of a diverse group of people who bring a variety of experiences and perspectives, decide on event purpose, topics, and decision-making points.❖ Events can include social events, cultural exchanges, health clinics, education opportunities, meetings, workshops, dialogues, contests and more.❖ Craft dialogue prompts that invite various perspectives and solutions. Avoid jargon and leading questions.❖ See this checklist for more details about planning accessible and welcoming meetings and events.
Recruit and train diverse facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Identify facilitators that are reflective of community demographics (gender, sexual orientation, race, culture, age, etc.). Facilitator teams that pair adults and young people or formal and informal leaders, can be especially effective.❖ Prepare facilitators to create inclusive spaces for conversation (i.e. scan for equitable participation, model power sharing, create a space to hold uncomfortable conversations, foster a welcoming atmosphere).
Join existing events or host gatherings in the right place at the right time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Choose locations that are familiar to the people you're trying to connect with (e.g. community centers, libraries, living rooms, restaurants).❖ Schedule events that don't interfere with days of celebration, religious observances, and cultural festivals.
Provide support so everyone can participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Offer supports such as child-care, transportation, meals, and translation.❖ In some cases, stipends or incentives can be helpful.❖ Make sure venues are accessible to all.❖ See this checklist for more details
Communicate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Before a gathering, make an outreach plan which prioritizes personal invitations. Make a list of contacts and include details on how each person will be reached and by whom. Strategies include: one to one conversations, text messaging, personalized emails, or phone calls.❖ During the process, let people know what is happening, what role you are asking them to play, why it matters, and what will happen next (this is sometimes referred to as "bridging").❖ After the gathering, update participants about decisions, impacts, and opportunities for future involvement.❖ Share openly about challenges you are facing as well as successes

III. Share Power

Ensure All Voices Are Heard	Share Decision-Making	Commit to Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Go where people are already organizing to learn more about their concerns, ideas and change initiatives. ❖ If you are hosting events, create a progression of opportunities from “thin” one-time activities (a game, online survey, 1-1 conversation) to “thick” activities that involve more time and trust (a dialogue circle). ❖ Combining “thin” and “thick” activities creates opportunities for developing deeper connections, collective momentum and greater access to decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Choose a decision-making process (e.g., consensus, voting) that is agreed to by the group. ❖ Scan the group to ensure that everyone is an active participant. ❖ Ensure that key decision-makers reflect the diversity of the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Discuss ahead of time what commitments you or your organization is able to make to participants. ❖ Be prepared to share how you plan to work with participants and use the information gathered to make decisions and create change. Share these commitments with the group. ❖ Extend an invitation to participants to come up with solutions or ideas that may go beyond the scope of your organization’s focus or resources. Be clear about ways you will be able to support those additional ideas (e.g., connecting people to resources).

III. Additional Resources

<p><u>Principles of Equitable Community Engagement</u> Kirwan Institute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Embrace the Gifts of Diversity ❖ Realize the Role of Race, Power, and Injustice ❖ Radical Hospitality: Invitation and Listening ❖ Trust-Building and Commitment ❖ Honoring Dissent and Embracing Protest ❖ Adaptability to Community Change
<p><u>Liberatory Design</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Liberatory Design is a creative problem-solving approach and practice that centers equity and supports us to design for liberation
<p><u>IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation</u> IAP2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ This framework can ensure that there is alignment between the purpose of your engagement process, the design of activities, and your communication with potential participants about their role. 