

# FOOD ACCESS POLICY CHANGE THROUGH AUTHENTIC RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

The [Healthy Food Policy Project \(HFPP\)](#) team and its Advisory Committee members developed this definition and these working principles to provide a template for authentic resident engagement in food access policy change. In many communities, the first step in this process is reaching out to community and base-building organizations that already have deep and trusted relationships with residents. Absent these organizations, it may be appropriate to engage directly with residents, but only if there is a long-term commitment to engagement. The definition seeks to explain what HFPP means when using the term “authentic resident engagement” and the principles are tools to be used throughout the policy development process.

## DEFINITION OF AUTHENTIC RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Authentic resident engagement describes an inclusive process for informing, designing, implementing, and evaluating food access policy changes that centers community residents. By inclusive, we mean moving beyond participatory practices and acknowledging the long-standing deficiency by policy and advocacy organizations, government and public health officials, and others to embrace the capacity, knowledge, and experience already present in dynamic and resilient communities. This requires an intentional commitment to address power imbalances and overcome historical and ongoing barriers to inclusion (such as the law, policy, and systems that intentionally exclude Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) while supporting and looking to those most affected by inequities to lead the process.

## WORKING PRINCIPLES

### ADDRESS POWER IMBALANCE: Work to remove or overcome historical and ongoing barriers to inclusion and the impact of systemic and structural racism

1.) Intentionally addressing factors affecting residents' ability to exercise their power.<sup>1</sup>

Example: Historical and generational trauma caused by federal policy that aimed to eradicate culture and ways of life that traditionally supported community health, oppression, redlining, disenfranchisement, disinvestment, etc.

2.) Committing to building long-term solutions based on a community's history and strength-based assets.<sup>2</sup>

Example: Follow the lead of community leaders and provide safe and trusted environments to listen, understand, and honor peoples' lived experiences.<sup>3</sup>

3.) Designing and implementing local food access policies based on residents' priorities, contexts, and capacities, recognizing that no two communities are alike.<sup>4</sup>

Example: Co-design policy solutions<sup>5</sup> that impact residents' ability to access healthy food in their community (e.g., food insecurity, housing, transportation, etc.)

## BUILD TRUST: Establish long-term relationships with community and base-building organizations and/or residents<sup>6</sup>

1.) Take time to connect personally and listen authentically. Invest time, energy, and effort.

Example: Show up for community events when appropriate. Do not come in with an agenda. Support and assist policy initiatives already planned by the community.

2.) Change resource allocations and hiring practices so residents are compensated for developing policies that will impact their community.

Example: Offer jobs, stipends, childcare, translational services, transportation compensation, meals, etc.

STANCE TOWARDS COMMUNITY	0 IGNORE	1 INFORM	2 CONSULT	3 INVOLVE	4 COLLABORATE	5 DEFER TO
<b>Impact</b>	Marginalization	Placation	Tokenization	Voice	Delegated Power	Community Ownership
<b>Community Engagement Goals</b>	Deny access to decision-making processes	Provide the community with relevant information	Gather input from the community	Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process and inform planning	Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions	Foster democratic participation and equity by placing full decision-making in the hands of the community; bridge divide between community and governance
<b>Message to Community</b>	"Your voice, needs, and interests do not matter"	"We will keep you informed"	"We care what you think"	"You are making us think (and therefore act) differently about the issue"	"Your leadership and expertise are critical to how we address the issue"	"It's time to unlock collective power and capacity for transformative solutions"
<b>Activities</b>	Closed-Door Meetings Misinformation Systemic Disenfranchisement Voter Suppression	Fact Sheets Open Houses Presentations Billboards Videos	Public Comment Focus Groups Community Forums Surveys	Community Organizing & Advocacy House Meetings Interactive Workshops Polling Community Forums	MOUs with Community-Based Organizations Community Organizing Citizen Advisory Committees Open Planning Forums with Citizen Polling	Community-Driven Planning Consensus Building Participatory Action Research Participatory Budgeting Cooperatives

SOURCE: FROM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP: TOOLS FOR THE FIELD WITH CASE STUDIES OF FOUR MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ENVIRONMENTAL AND RACIAL EQUITY COMMITTEES, URBAN SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTORS NETWORK

## TAKE AN ANTI-RACISM STANCE: Intentionally address institutional and structural racism, white supremacy, and discrimination and exclusion<sup>7</sup>

1.) Bring awareness to racial inequities.

Resources:

- [National League of Cities' resource on Advancing Racial Equity in Your City](#)
- [Center for Social Inclusion's Racial Equity in the Food System resource](#)

2.) Support solutions that address historical harms that have created and perpetuate health disparities among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Nationally, municipalities have passed resolutions, in various forms, to: address the impact of the institution of slavery, the genocide of Indigenous People, and continued discrimination in their communities; to establish a truth and reconciliation process; and/or provide reparations including, but not limited to, cash payments to individuals and organizations and a commitment to community development in priority communities.

- [Minneapolis, Minnesota: Resolution Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Process](#)
- [Providence, Rhode Island: Declaration on Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations](#)
- [Asheville, North Carolina: Resolution Supporting Community Reparations for Black Asheville](#)
- [Evanston, Illinois: A Resolution: Commitment to End Structural Racism and Achieve Racial Equity](#)

**USE AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH:<sup>8</sup> Remove a deficit-based approach and apply an asset-based framework to food access policy work**

1.) An asset-based approach identifies and builds upon residents' strengths and provides a framework for community ownership.

Example:

	DEFICIT BASED	ASSET BASED
Purpose	Changing community through increased services	Changing community through citizen involvement
Method	Institutional Reform	Citizen-centered production
Accountability	Leaders are professionals and staff, accountable to institutional stakeholders	Leaders are widening circles of volunteer citizens who are accountable to the community
Role of Assets	Assets are system inputs. Asset mapping is data collection.	Assets are relationships to be discovered and connected. Asset-mapping is self-realization and leadership development.
Resources	Money is the key resource. Falls apart without money.	Relationships are the key resource. Falls apart when money becomes the focus.
Operating Challenge	How do we get citizens involved?	How do we channel and build on citizen participation?
System Dynamic	Tends to spread itself thinner over time.	Tends to gain momentum over time.
Evaluation	Success is service outcomes, measured mostly by institutional stakeholders.	Success is capacity, measured mostly by relationships.

SOURCE: DAN DUNCAN, ABCD INSTITUTE FACULTY, ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: AT A GLANCE, TAMARACK INSTITUTE

## External Reviewers

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## Resources

- From Community Engagement to Ownership: Tools for the Field with Case Studies of Four Municipal Community-Driven Environmental and Racial Equity Committees, Urban Sustainability Directors Network, [https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community\\_engagement\\_to\\_ownership\\_-\\_tools\\_and\\_case\\_studies\\_final.pdf](https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/community_engagement_to_ownership_-_tools_and_case_studies_final.pdf).
- Kathryn S. Quick & Martha S. Feldman, Distinguishing Participation and Inclusion, Journal of Planning Education and Research (June 2011), <http://healthyfoodpolicyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/Distinguishing-inclusion-and-participation-in-public-engagement.pdf>.
- Principles of Authentic Community Engagement, Minnesota Department of Health (July 2018), <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/resources/phqitoolbox/docs/AuthenticPrinciplesCommEng.pdf>.
- Working Principles for Health Justice and Racial Equity, The Praxis Project, [www.thepraxisproject.org/our-principles](http://www.thepraxisproject.org/our-principles)

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Principles of Authentic Community Engagement, Minnesota Department of Health (July 2018), <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/resources/phqitoolbox/docs/AuthenticPrinciplesCommEng.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Working Principles for Health Justice and Racial Equity, The Praxis Project, [www.thepraxisproject.org/our-principles](http://www.thepraxisproject.org/our-principles)

<sup>3</sup> Id.

<sup>4</sup> Id.

<sup>5</sup> Co-design is grounded in a participatory framework and when applied to policy, it means working with communities affected by an issue to contribute to its solution. Residents of the community are seen as the experts, know their community assets, and have intuitive knowledge on how to design policies that relate to their experiences. <https://www.anzsog.edu.au/resource-library/research/the-promise-of-co-design-for-public-policy#:~:text=Co%E2%80%90design%20is%20underpinned%20by,that%20relate%20to%20those%20experiences>.

<sup>6</sup> Principles of Authentic Community Engagement, Minnesota Department of Health (July 2018), <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/resources/phqitoolbox/docs/AuthenticPrinciplesCommEng.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Id.

<sup>8</sup> "Asset-based community development, also known as ABCD, acknowledges and embraces particularly the strong neighborhood rooted traditions of community organizing, community economic development and neighborhood planning." John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, Introduction to "Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets, Institute for Policy Research (1993).