

Community engagement and co-design

Engaging communities while a decision can still change, being honest about how much influence people have, and closing the loop on what happened with their input.

Goals: Community engagement; Eliminate disparities

Why it matters

DSD's own engagement review found work that was fragmented, event-based, and repeated without coordination, and found that people rarely heard what changed. Trust is built by fixing those patterns.

Questions to begin with

- What decision can this engagement still influence, and by when?
- Are we informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, or co-designing? Have we said so?
- Who is affected and who is missing? Who has already been asked, and what were they told?
- How are people compensated, supported to participate, and told what changed?

Work you can take forward

Plan engagement that shares influence

An engagement plan with a clear influence level, access supports, compensation, trusted messengers, and a named owner for the relationship.

Program and policy staff · Communications and language access · Equity Directors and Specialists

- **Engagement that shares influence: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, co-design** — program page [/library/ja-engagement-influence-ladder](#)
- **Access checks before a meeting, outreach, or session** — program page [/library/ja-access-checks](#)
- **Planning with partners: who to involve** — program page [/library/ja-stakeholder-map](#)

Ask: We want community input on a service change. How do we decide how much influence people actually have, and say so honestly?

Report back on what was heard and what changed

A short, accessible record of what people said, what changed, what could not change, why, and what happens next.

Program and policy staff · Communications and language access

- **Reporting back: what we heard, what changed, what could not, and why** — program page /library/ja-report-back

Ask: We finished listening sessions. What does a good report-back look like?

Prepare for work with a Minnesota community

Better questions, planned access, and named partners, without treating a brief as a description of any one person.

Service delivery and support planning · Program and policy staff

- **Using community context without profiling** — program page /library/pn-intercultural-method
- **Using community material as questions, not descriptions** — program page /library/pn-cultural-humility-briefs-as-questions

Ask: How do I prepare for a listening session with a community I do not know well without stereotyping anyone?

Tools and frameworks

- **Tool card: GARE Racial Equity Toolkit** — The Government Alliance on Race and Equity describes racial equity tools as structured ways to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity into decisions, policies, practices, programs, and budgets. Public. Permitted use: cite, link, adapt the method with attribution.
- **Tool card: National CLAS Standards** — The National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health. Public. Permitted use: cite, link, follow as a frame for language and cultural access planning.

In DSD work

One DSD adds the division's engagement findings as approved aggregate themes, DSD scenarios, and the consultation pathway. Tribal consultation stays a separate, government-to-government route.

- DSD community engagement recommendations (January 2024)
- Advisory and stakeholder groups
- Provider and county partnerships

Connected programs

- Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention and children's services

Situations to explore

- Community input requested after the decision is effectively final
- Listening sessions are done. Now what?