

April 2022

# Community Engagement Forum Follow Up Questions



Answers below are from the April 2022 Community Engagement Forum presenters, Joshua Williams and Adrian Miller

**Did you run into people who were hesitant to participate in your work and how did you overcome that?**



**ANSWER:**

We often ran into people hesitant to engage us about hosting events, and then we also ran into people who felt hesitant to come to events once they had been planned. Communication and in-person meetings, whenever possible, so that faith communities and interested leadership could hear from us and help plan events that would be tailored to their communities' needs were critical in gaining buy-in from community partners and increasing attendance at events.

**When approaching stigmatized topics, how can you engage people in the project?**



**ANSWER:**

We acknowledged up front that vaccination is stigmatizing and created ground rules for our events to which all attendees agreed at the outset. We also were clear that ANY questions were "fair game" and asked people to participate to their comfort level. Setting ground rules and avoiding perceptions that certain ideas are "right" or "wrong" went a long way to creating a safe atmosphere for our events. We found that initial conversations with the faith leader and people in the congregation helped with us with engagement and building trust.

**Describe the challenges in creating and giving people space for learning and being open.**



**ANSWER:**

Certain people are genuinely interested, and others may have been drawn along by significant others (or a free meal). This can lead to certain people commanding more of the conversation time while others seem to participate less. Active solicitation of participation from all attendees, inclusion of name-tags so that you can call people by their preferred name, and asking for help from community leaders themselves were 3 ways we tried to create space for active participation that might lead to learning. See above for how we tried to give space for a range of ideas/views.

**In the beginning for planning, what things do you AVOID when creating your partnership and programs?**



**ANSWER:**

The only thing we really avoided was an inflexible commitment to doing things a 'certain' way. We agreed on the distribution of labor and then both remained open to the need to evolve our work and our partnership over the course of our time together as the community suggested we should. I would strongly avoid going into any community partnership work thinking you have a 'right' way at the outset and would actively solicit feedback to iteratively improve engagement and research along the way.

**Were there any barriers with getting buy in for vaccination clinics at their events?**



**ANSWER:**

Yes! Certain faith communities were hesitant about hosting vaccination clinics because the topic is polarizing, whereas others were eager to do so. Much of this rested with the leadership and drive of the clergy person at the faith community. When the pastor (or a passionate lay leader) took on responsibility and encouraged it, the events happened.



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