

The Community Impact Statement Process: A tool for creating healthy partnerships

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Preamble to the Community Impact Statement Process

WHY CONSIDER A COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT?

There is often an assessment performed of the impact of larger real estate development projects before they are initiated within a community. Sometimes, it is not just the completion of the real estate development that impacts the community---the very process of building the development can impact the relationship between the development and the surrounding area. For example: will there be additional noise and traffic concerns? Will there need to be temporary detours? Will the residents or businesses around the development be able to access their buildings and safely accommodate guests and visitors? Will there be advance notice presented to the community about the project's timeline, possible temporary inconveniences, and discussion about who will present that information and in what formats, etc.? Will the surrounding community participate in the design or development process in any way so that there are opportunities for the community to help to determine or guide what positive impacts might be achievable because of the real estate development?

Often, if these impacts, positive or negative, are considered and directly addressed BEFORE a project is initiated, the negative results may be minimized. Positive impacts may possibly be realized that were not considered at the initiation of the project's conception. A relationship can be built or strengthened between the developer, municipality and the community that can prove to be useful for solving additional problems as they arise.

Community-university/institution partnerships also work much better when time is taken and a conscious effort is made to build or deepen the relationship between individual members as well as the partnership as a whole. After all, the work of a community- university partnership is not just to accomplish a service-learning or research project. The "real work" is to share knowledge on an equal playing field established through mutual respect and trust. Knowledge can truly be shared when power is also shared.

The process of developing a "Community Impact Statement" (CIS) presented is a way of considering what the impact of the partnership will be on the community and the academic institution so that ultimately, benefits to the community can be realized. While the academic institution most definitely needs to benefit from the relationship, their benefits almost always supersede the community's. By working through this process before or at the beginning of the project, the partnership has the opportunity to build a relationship and more consciously share power--- leading to a model where partnerships can be sustained, share knowledge, and reap mutual benefits.

The CIS is meant to guide conversations between community and institutional partners as the partnership is formed and the work to sustain it is undertaken. Following are some definitions and principles to consider in initiating these conversations.

DEFINITIONS – According to Community Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH)

COMMUNITY

What we mean by “community” is dynamic and inclusive; there is no “one” definition of community. Community need not be defined solely by geography. It can refer to a group that self-identifies by age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, illness or health condition. It can refer to a common interest or cause, a sense of identification or shared emotional connection, shared values or norms, mutual influence, common interest, or commitment to meeting a shared need. Institutions and individuals based out of institutions can be “the community” in certain situations. Grassroots organizations and community residents can be “the community” in certain situations.

Defining “community” in a community-campus partnership is more about the process of asking questions than about a strict definition of who “is” community or “represents” community: “Are those most affected by the problem at the table? Are community members at the table? Are those who have a stake in the issue being addressed at the table? Do they play decision making roles?” The purpose of the partnership drives the definition, therefore each effort must ask for the definition of community.

CAMPUS

The interpretation of “campus” and “higher educational institution” includes the continuum of higher educational institutions, including community colleges, colleges and universities.

CCPH’s PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP¹

Guiding Principles: The CCPH Principles of Partnership below are not meant to be prescriptive or adopted verbatim but rather to be used for discussion or as a model for developing one’s own principles of partnership.

1. The Partnership forms to serve a specific purpose and may take on new goals over time.
2. The Partnership agrees upon mission, values, goals, measurable outcomes and processes for accountability.
3. The relationship between partners in the Partnership is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
4. The Partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
5. The Partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.

6. Partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority in the Partnership by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
7. Principles and processes for the Partnership are established with the input and agreement of all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
8. There is feedback among all stakeholders in the Partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the Partnership and its outcomes.
9. Partners share the benefits of the Partnership's accomplishments.
10. Partnerships can dissolve, and when they do, need to plan a process for closure. Partnerships consider the nature of the environment within which they exist as a principle of their design, evaluation, and sustainability.
11. The Partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.

¹ CCPH Position Statement on Authentic Partnerships, Including Guiding Principles of Partnership. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health. <https://ccph.memberclicks.net/principles-of-partnership>

THE FOUR, MAIN SECTIONS OF THE CIS PROCESS:

- I. Preparing the Ground
- II. Making the Connections/Building the Relationships
- III. Doing the Work
- IV. The Harvest: Evaluation/Dissemination/Policy Implications/Completion

Discussion Points for the Process of Developing A COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT

PREPARING THE GROUND

What is our history? How did we get here? Where did our idea to work together originate? Who were the individuals involved? Who approached who and why? What was the original idea or question that we came together to address? Do all members have a common understanding of our origins? Is this history shared from time to time? What does our project look like now? Is it an education, research or service project?

Commonalities and differences: What are the common goals that exist for coming together? What are the attributes that the partnership participants have in common e.g. being parents, caring for children, wanting to prevent a certain disease, etc. What are the differences that exist between the participants e.g. level of education, where people live, employment status? What is at least one asset of each partnership member? These can be items from being a firm but respectful timekeeper at a meeting to being a great scribe. What are the racial, class and cultural makeup of the meeting goers? Who has and has not worked in that particular cultural group before?

Logistics ground rules: Who calls the meetings? Where will the meetings be held and why? How often will meetings be held? Is there an individual, organization or outside entity that is driving logistical decisions and is everyone comfortable with this? Who will set the agenda? How soon before the meeting will all meeting participants have the agenda? What is the expectation around attendance? Who will take notes? Will notes be distributed? What time of day will meeting be held and why? Is the meeting time more convenient for some and less convenient for others? Will that affect the group in any way? Are there meeting provisions such as transportation, food, or day care that would facilitate a broader spectrum of people being able to attend the meeting? How often might these logistical arrangements need to be reviewed so that there is full, equal and broad participation by as many people as necessary to the process?

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS/BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS

Meeting Ground Rules: Who will chair the meetings? Will the Chair get appointed or elected? How will decisions get made-consensus, Robert's Rules of Order or a blend of both systems? Will there be training in how to effectively use these decision-making processes? Will the entire group go through the training at the same time? Will these decisions be documented? Where will the documents be kept? Will they be reviewed? How often will the decision-making process be revisited to see that the group is still comfortable with it? How will the group deal with "parking lot" conversations"? What are the other ground rules of the meetings, for example: use of swear words, missing meetings, needing to request a change to the agenda, presence of children, etc.? Who is attending the meeting because it is "part of their job", career path, educational

goals, etc., and who is attending as a true volunteer? Is there or will there be a tension between these different meeting attendance perspectives?

Meeting Participants and Stakeholders: Who are the participants of the group? Are they representing an organization or an institution? Are they consistent each month----- in other words, can an organization or institution send a different person each month? How do these participants report back to their organizations/institutions if they are to do so? Do they have a basic understanding of the parallel goals of the group to design and implement a project and to build a model of shared power? Is there “buy-in”? Are there stakeholders outside of the core partnership participants? Have they been identified? Has a clear communication strategy been established with these stakeholders?

Undoing Racism: Have individual members of the group participated in undoing racism workshops resulting in a power dynamic between those who have attended such trainings and those who have not? In general, are there more white people in the group than people of color? Has the group openly discussed the institutionalization of race and class discrimination and the effect of the issue of power and privilege on the group?

Self-Interest: Has each person declared what their individual self-interest in participating in the group is? Are some individual group members also representing an organization or institution that has a self-interest? If so, what is it?

Shared Power: Has a power analysis been performed by the group that goes beyond just the aspect of who has more financial resources? Has each individual been asked to reflect upon their own personal power in the group and discussed the responsibility that comes with having power? Have all the issues of power and privilege---education level, culture, class, institutional resources, acquired knowledge, etc.----been laid out on the table? What are the possible strategies or techniques with which the group can be made comfortable to attempt to equal the playing field so that power can be shared? Has a commitment been made to revisit this particular issue of “power” on at least an annual basis? Are there any risks involved institutionally or within the community with the idea of “sharing power”?

DOING THE WORK

Mutual Benefits: What are the benefits to the university or higher education institution: implicit or clearly delineated as part of the project? Are these the same benefits that the community organizations or participants see as the benefits to the university? What are the benefits that the project will provide to the community? Are these the same benefits that the community wants to receive from the work and the partnership? Do all concerned agree to mutually work to providing these benefits for and with each other? How often will these lists of pursued mutual benefits be reviewed and perhaps, revised? Is there potential for risk of negative impacts on the community? Are there any risks for those involved in working to provide these mutual benefits? How these risks be prevented or minimized?

Funding: Which person or entity will seek the funding? Do they have the capacity to do so or will their organizational capacity be increased by pursuing the funding? How will other members of the group support and assist them in this process? What will the accountability measures be to report on the funding procurement and the implementation of the funding if received? Does money need to be raised for paying stipends? How is the money divided between the project partners? If not all of the funding is received that is needed, is there a “plan B”? What will the potential impact of this be on the partnership? What was the process for making the funding decisions and was the process documented so the partnership can reflect on this piece of history in the future? Are there resource concessions or risks that some organizations have to make to participate in the partnership and have they been identified? Has each institution or organization laid out their own internal funding request approval process so that the group as a whole understands the implications and timeline? Will the policies of one institution need to be followed and, in effect, “trump” the policies of other institutions or organizations participating in the project? Will the financial constraints of community partners be adequately considered so that they may be effectively engaged and sustained? How might the policies of the lead institution or organization be met while meeting the needs of all of the partners involved?

Institutional Review Board (IRB): Will there be a need to have the project reviewed by an IRB? What is the IRB’s familiarity with community-based, (not “placed”) projects? Is there an opportunity to have some advance dialogue with the IRB about the project? Is there an opportunity to establish a Community IRB? Has the issue of potential impact to an individual versus a community been examined so this piece can be part of the discussion with the IRB?

Reporting to Other Stakeholders: Has time been built into the project timeline to communicate with the other stakeholders of the group? Have communication strategies been identified with those stakeholders?

Timeline: What are the external timelines from the stakeholders or funding agencies that come to bear on the timeline of the community university partnership? What are the expectations around time that each the community and university entities may have around time? Have major progress points or hallmarks been identified? Where are the conflicts that might arrive around timeframe? How often do timeframes need to be revisited? Whose job is it to see that these timeframe discussions occur?

Hallmarks and Celebrations: Have major hallmarks or progress points been identified and communicated to partners so that these are mutually understood? What would be good methods of taking stock of the progress and celebrating it? Who needs to be present or invited for those celebrations in addition to the partnership members? Are there progress reports made at these events, and, if so, in what form are they made? How are the cultural components of the partnership reflected in the celebrations?

Conflict and Conflict Resolution: If conflict helps to bring change, has the partnership been introduced to this concept and embraced the notion that conflict will be an integral part

of the work? Has a formal conflict resolution procedure been introduced and accepted by the partnership? What are the opportunities for training around the issues of conflict and conflict resolution?

THE HARVEST: EVALUATION * DISSEMINATION * POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Evaluation: How will the project be evaluated? Who will do the evaluating, internal or external evaluator? Has the funds been raised to do this evaluation? What are the possible funding entities for this evaluation? Who will write the proposals if it is decided that grants will be pursued? Will all members of the partnership be able to fully participate in the evaluation-why or why not?

Dissemination: Who will make decisions about how the data will be used? How will these decisions be made? Where will the results of the work be disseminated? What will be the format of those materials? How will the work of the partnership be shared with the community? What role will the community play in disseminating those materials? If journal articles are one of the ways that the materials are to be disseminated, how will the community be acknowledged or credited? Are there other ways to share the materials beyond written formats? How will the credit and the glory (if there is any) be shared? Will the community bring the academic institution representatives into the community to share the podium? How will the achievements of all be hallmarked and celebrated?

Policy Implications: Are there possible policy implications for this work? What are they? How will possible policy makers, staff or organizations affected by future policies be brought into this work and/or be informed about the projects? Who will carry the “torch” for doing so? What will the role of the higher-ed institution be in thinking about the policy implications and the potential policy changes? Are there any risks involved?

Completion: What happens when the project developed by the partnership is completed? Is the work of the partnership project-based or relationship-based? Is there energy to make the partnership sustainable? Will this happen because that is truly what all of the participants want or is it just too difficult to say goodbye? If the partnership becomes an ongoing entity, what will be gained and what will be lost? Have all of the accomplishments and the project completion noted, documented and/or celebrated? If the partnership is not going to continue, has a graceful and respectful “sunset” been planned and projected on the timeline?

OTHER KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN A COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENT:

1. When is it too late to consider embarking on a Community Impact Statement process?
2. Should a natural sunset to the partnership be built in from the beginning or assessed along the way in order to decide if the partnership will become a

sustainable entity? How will the group know when the “end has come?” How will the partnership dissolve with grace and integrity?

3. Are there other environmental, economic and/or sociological impacts that have not been realized?
4. How will documentation of the process be achieved?
5. Are there risks to any of the individuals or organizations involved in the partnership and have those been identified? For example, if a project is not completed on time, will a faculty person’s Promotion and Tenure be affected? If a grant is not received, will valuable community members have to be laid-off or dismissed from the project?
6. What will the resulting covenant or agreement look like? Will it be AN oral agreement, a written document such as a Memorandum of Understanding or a contract?

This set of guiding questions and process outline was conceived through the work of the Phillips Neighborhood Healthy Housing Collaborative (PNHHC), which existed from 1993 to 2003. The PNHHC conducted two federally-funded CBPR research projects during this time and also participated in community organizing, community education, direct services around eliminating childhood lead poisoning in addition to public policy change. This CIS process is based on the lessons learned and shared experiences between the Phillips community and University of Minnesota faculty members. As a process, it has never been used or tested by a particular group, as far as we know.

We are hopeful that this process may prove useful to community-university/institution partnerships. However, we won’t know this to be true nor will we be able to make improvements or evaluate this process unless we hear from you. Please consider giving us feedback about what you found most useful and how the CIS might be improved. Or, if you would like to discuss the possibility of seeking assistance to implement this process in your community partnership, please contact us. Thank you!

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