# **Equity and Engagement Exercise**

Overview

# **Objective**

To use scenarios to identify and think through barriers to participation in community engagement. These scenarios offer considerations about equity, vulnerability, and trauma.

# **Preparation**

**Who will be involved:** core team, activity lead

**Suggested activity length:** 1 hour

**Materials:** copies of this document, pens and pencils

# **Output**

At the end of the exercise, you will have ideas for overcoming obstacles to engagement and incentivizing participation that you can incorporate into your community engagement plan.

**What to do next**

Use the lessons learned in this activity to help inform how the core team can encourage participation in future core team activities and community workshops. Refer to these notes when completing later community engagement activities, including designing your community engagement plan.

# **Equity and Engagement Exercise**

# **Instructions**

1. Read the scenarios below.
2. Break into small groups (2-3 people per group) and each group choose a scenario to work on.
3. Assign a note taker for each group.
4. Take 20-30 minutes to work through the selected scenario in your small group and answer the questions. Have the note taker record the highlights of your discussion.
5. Bring small groups together and discuss the activity as the core team (est. 30 minutes). Respond to the provided discussion questions.

# **Scenarios**

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| **Scenario 1:** |
| Anna is a single mother with an eight-year-old son and another child on the way. She works two jobs to provide enough money to support her growing family. She doesn’t own a car and relies on public transportation to get to work and run errands. She’s very busy, overworked, and has little to no expendable income. She noticed flyers posted at the local library about an upcoming community workshop on resilience planning. But she doesn’t know how the workshop would benefit her and she doesn’t know what a resilience plan is. She also doesn’t know how she would be able to attend without childcare.   * What challenges/obstacles does Anna face in getting to the workshop and participating? * What could the workshop planners do to encourage Anna’s participation? * What information do you think Anna would need to decide to attend the workshop? |

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| **Scenario 2:** |
| Robert is an immigrant from Haiti. His native language is Haitian Creole, and he speaks limited English. He’s survived through several severe hurricanes in Haiti and the memories of the hardships he’s endured are painful. A member of his local Haitian Community Center has asked him if would attend a resilience planning workshop and share his experiences with disaster recovery. But Robert is hesitant to go because it’s unclear whether there will be a translator. He also doesn’t think he’d feel comfortable sharing sad and traumatizing memories with strangers. He also doesn’t know how his participation would be valued.   * What barriers are there to Robert participating in the workshop? * What could the workshop planners do to make Robert feel comfortable attending and participating, especially acknowledging his past traumas? * How can the workshop planners show that Robert’s input is valued? |

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| **Scenario 3:** |
| Ruby is an 85-year-old African American woman who has lived in the same house since she was a young girl. She’s proud of her home because she remembers the hardships her parents had to go through to purchase the house. Her neighborhood was red-lined, and no banks wanted to give her parents a loan to buy the house. Unfortunately, whenever it rains heavily, the neighborhood streets and her basement flood with two feet of water. Sometimes there’s a bad smell that wafts around the neighborhood, coming from an abandoned chemical factory. The neighbors fear the chemical factory has contaminated the drinking water and people are afraid of getting cancer. A group of concerned residents, including Ruby, have tried to raise attention to the problems, but they’ve been unsuccessful. Recently, a planning group with the city has asked the concerned residents to participate in an upcoming resilience planning session. But Ruby is skeptical. She fears that this will be another example of the city pretending to listen and doing nothing. She doesn’t trust the local government to have her neighborhood’s best interests in mind, especially after decades of racism and broken promises.   * What barriers are keeping Ruby from participating in the planning session? * What could the resilience planners do to address Ruby’s concerns and mistrust? * How could the planners acknowledge and begin to address the environmental justice concerns that the community raises? |

# **Group discussion**

1. What emotions came up for you during this discussion?
2. Are there other challenges/issues that you can think of that didn’t come up in this activity that you think are important to consider?
3. As you were going through these scenarios, how did the identities of each person effect your strategies to help them achieve their goals?

1. How can the solutions you came up with for the scenarios be translated to improving participation in resilience planning? What unique difficulties might that entail?