

The Power of Authentic Engagement

The bottom of the slide is decorated with two large, curved shapes. On the left is a solid orange shape, and on the right is a light orange shape, both with rounded edges that meet at the bottom center.

The Power of Authentic Engagement

A thick orange line that starts horizontally from the left edge of the slide and then curves downwards and to the right, ending at the bottom right corner.

Ideas developed through the Tamarack Learning Centre and engagement with community partners

About Liz Weaver



Liz Weaver

Former Co-CEO of the Tamarack Institute and consulting director



Tamarack Collaboration Tools and Resources

www.tamarackcommunity.ca






Engage with each other - Who is in the room?

Table Conversation

- Introduce Yourself at your table
- Describe and share your best engagement experience. Share what made it special.

Authentic Engagement

Heart	<p>Emotionally engaging</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Living your values, how to engage with people, being compassionate• See the light come on in someone – connection and space with people• Build trust, dignity and respect, show up for them• Weekly coffee and chat session
Hand	<p>Tangible and Practical</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Warm referrals and making warm connections• As talk to partners find that they engage with you and then find a path to deepen that engagement• Walking along side someone• Weekly coffee and chat session – use food as a way to connect and provide services on site – practical connection
Mind	<p>Logical and Impactful</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing the partners that we choose, making sure there is a values alignment• Intuitive and knowing that this is moving forward, and people are engaged• How we can help someone plant the seed to achieve themselves• Aligns to core purpose

What holds you back from authentic engagement?

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Fear.

What might you add to this list?

- Of reaching out to the public
- Of being verbally attacked
- Of being the front-person
- Of creating awareness to a problem
- Of the community wanting something you can't deliver
- Of disappointing people
- Of not being able to follow through

Zones of Engagement



Safety & Comfort Continuum –
Inspiring Communities

Visualizing Engagement

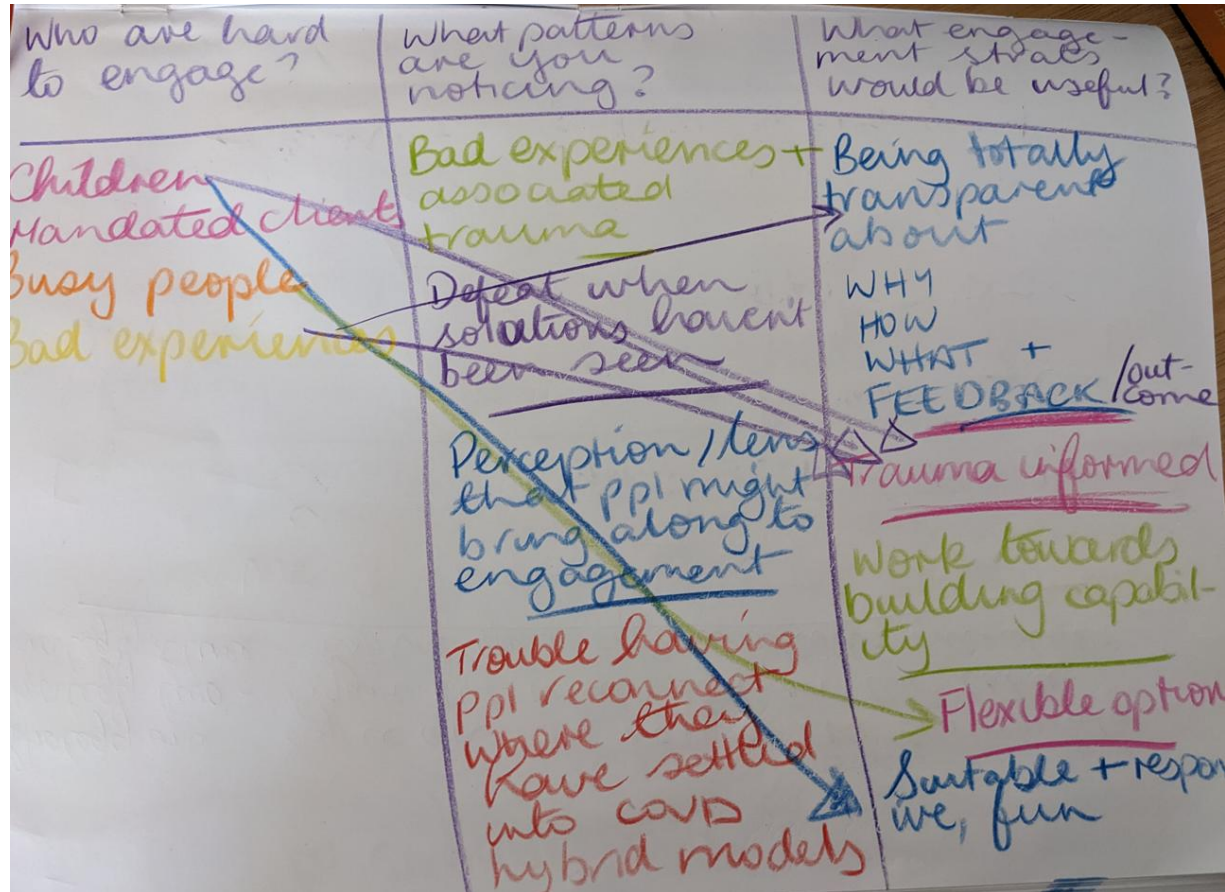


On a post it note or paper, draw a picture of your response to the following question.

Who are the hard to engage?

Share your ideas or visuals at your table.

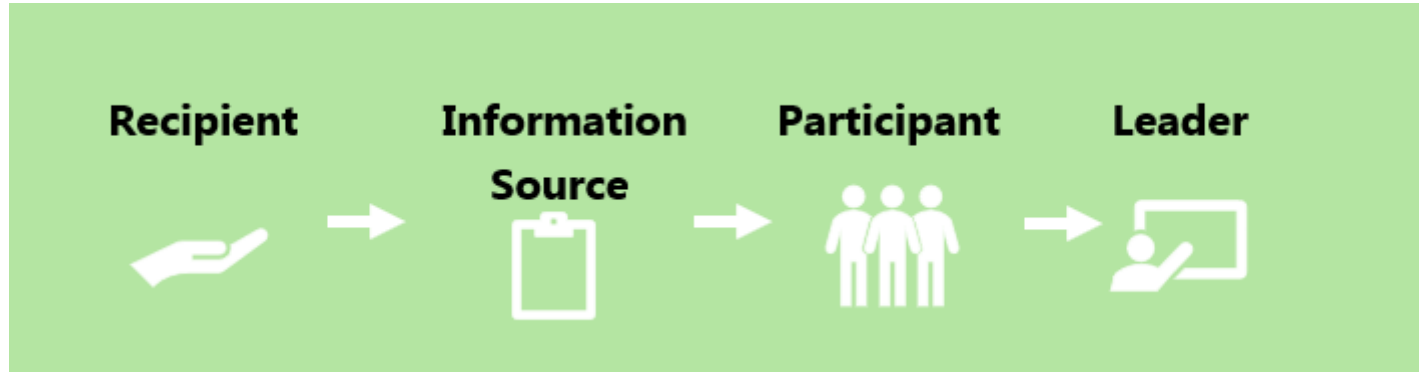
Visualizing Engagement – An approach



Authentic Engagement

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Consider and confirm the role of community



Your relationship with community



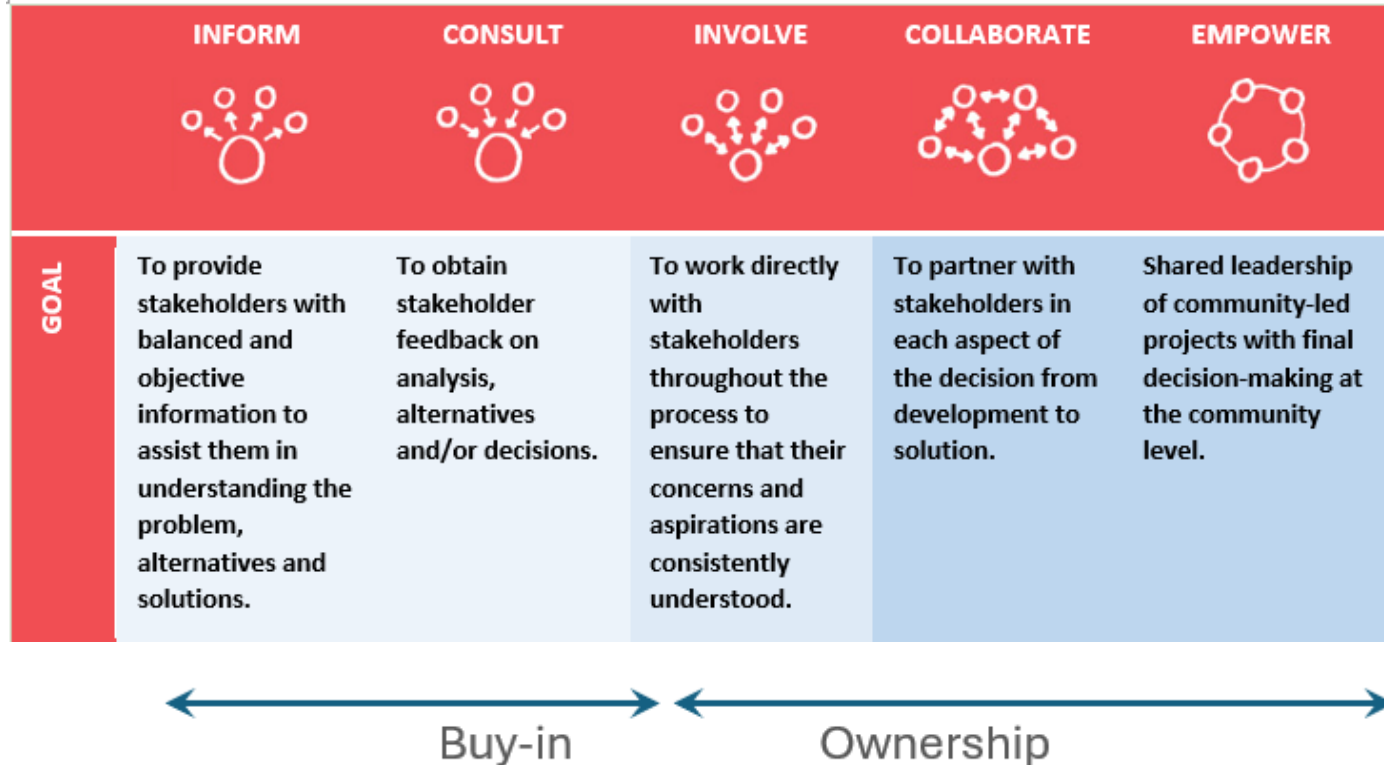
Move from buy in to shared or community ownership



Two approaches to Authentic Engagement

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The IAP2 Engagement Continuum



The CAPIRE Engagement Triangle

INFORMING DECISIONS

Should the community have any sort of input or influence into the outcomes of this work?

BUILDING CAPACITY

Do we need to share information or educate the community about any part of this work? Are we wanting to build skills or change behaviors?



STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

Are you looking to build or improve relationships with community members?

Authentic Engagement Strategies

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Determine what is 'on the table'

If you are in the situation where a lot of decisions have already been made, your job is then to:

1. Inform the community on those decisions and why they were made
2. Figure out what is still on the table and engage around those decisions instead

Consider the engagement mindset

What is your / your organizational mindset?

1. **A nice-to-have:** Viewing community engagement as a supplemental activity
2. **A like-to-have:** Desiring for community engagement to be a core function but feeling restrained by lack of resources
3. **A must-have:** Integrating community engagement so that it is how the work gets done

Authentic and Deep Engagement

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Understand your desire for control

“The path to authentic community engagement begins when organizations demonstrate a willingness to move beyond their own goals and ambitions to recognize and champion the individual and shared goals and ambitions of the community”.

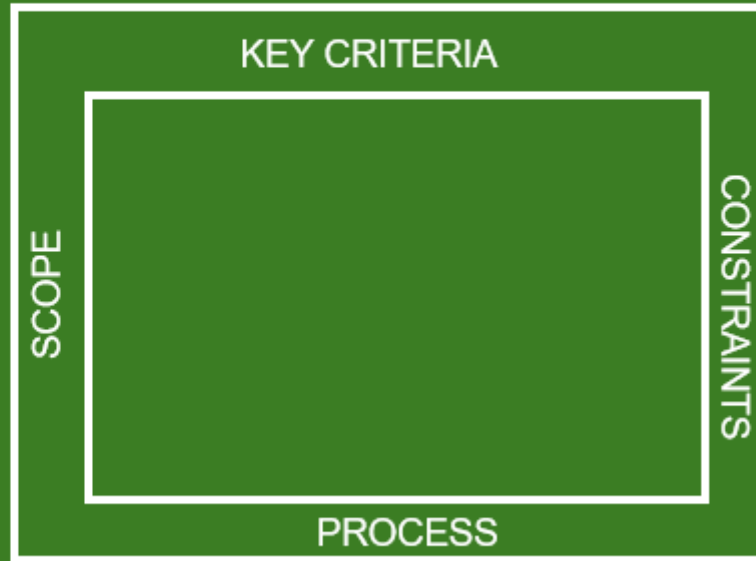
Sylvia Cheuy, Tamarack Institute

The costs of control in authentic engagement

- The implementation of policies or projects which do not meet community needs as they are based on incomplete information
- Having to implement supplementary processes to obtain information not generated by initial poor practice
- Limiting what is possible by not partnering and building upon shared resources
- Distrust amongst the community or with partners for poor or no engagement which will, in turn, affect the level of community support for the overall project or organization

Creating a container for authentic engagement

Explicitly describing the container is one of the most respectful things you can do. Consider your community engagement dilemma, what would be around the outside of the container?



Draw this frame and add in conditions relevant to your work

From transactional to transformational engagement

From transactional	To Transformational
PLANNING: Create an engagement plan	Engage the community to design the process.
ENGAGEMENT METHODS: Conduct a survey, poll or vote. Share the results in a summary report.	Move to engagement methods that allow people to interact with each other, share stories, discuss ideas. Share the results in a video that features only the voices of the community.
SHARING DATA: Share research and recent statistics about vulnerable populations before jumping into brainstorming and ideation	Invite people with lived experience to animate the data through a data walk , or share their experience and community intimately through walking interviews .
REPRESENTATION: Establish a lived experience advisory council who oversee the work and are consulted frequently throughout the process. Make sure that people with lived experience get a chance to provide input.	Ensure that there is significant lived experience representation at every table (board, leadership, working group) Address power differentials by having a member representing an equity-seeking population to chair the group and facilitate the conversations.

Always close the loop in authentic engagement

Always close the loop

This is the simplest way to show accountability.

Ensure the community is heard and feels heard. Communicate before a decision is made. Say, "this is what we heard from you" rather than "this is the choice we made." When the community sees themselves reflected in the process, they will not only feel acknowledged but also more accepting of outcomes.

Authentic and Deep Engagement

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Tools for your toolkit

Engagement Tools and Approaches

Tool 1: Telling our Stories

A facilitated approach to inviting participants to share their experiences focusing first on childhood, then young adulthood and finally the present. The synthesis of stories builds trust, relationships and identifies formative experiences.

Source: [Hyper Island – Sharing Our Stories](#)

Tool 2: The 15% Solution

What are you already doing that could contribute to our shared solution that would take only 5 – 15% more effort? Ask participants to write their solutions on a post it note with their name. Each person reads one solution.

Source: [Liberating Structures](#)

Tool 3: Practicing Inquiry

This is a simple tool to deepen your understanding about engagement. Present your issue or dilemma to a small team. Rather than seeking solutions, the team asks questions about your issue or dilemma.

Source: [Human Systems Dynamics – Rules for Inquiry](#)

Tool 4: Community Engagement Planning Canvas

This tool will help you build a community engagement plan. It provides useful community engagement tools and encourages you to consider how to move your community engagement efforts from idea to impact.

Source: [Tamarack – Community Engagement Planning Canvas](#)

Final Thoughts and Reflections

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Final thoughts and reflections

Write down three things that inspired you.

Share one action you will take after this conference with others at your table.

The background is a light pink color with a repeating pattern of stylized illustrations. These include various human figures in different poses and activities (walking, pushing a stroller, sitting in a wheelchair, exercising, etc.), simple line-art trees, and faint bar charts. The overall theme is community and health.

Health Justice 2025

Thank you for your engagement

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