Best practices for successful engagement

DO

- ☐ **Be prepared** – Start by ensuring your entire team is prepared for meaningful engagement.
- ☐ **Be Honest** – Be honest with your partners about how much influence they really have. Do they have a choice between pre-set options or can they influence the options? Honesty builds trust.
- ☐ **Be ready to listen** – Be ready to hear whatever your partners say, without defending or explaining. Your partners may see things in a way you don't. It does not mean they are wrong. You are engaging them because their experience may be different.
- ☐ **Be culturally humble** – Your partners may see their family, community or the world differently than you do. All our worldviews are legitimate. Stay curious!
- ☐ **Ask if you aren't sure** – Not sure what a group may need to feel safe and supported in an engagement? Ask a representative from an organization or a person more likely to know.
- ☐ **Have Resources –** Make sure you have the financial resources you need for travel reimbursement, facility rentals, refreshments or whatever you need. Your resources include staff time too. Ensure staff block off the time to engage, instead of doing it off the side of their desk.
- ☐ **Communicate** – Sometimes things take longer or plans change. People will understand if you tell them, but don't leave partners wondering. If you said the report would come out in three months and it will be five, tell them. If there is a change in the initiative leadership, let the partners know. Don't forget to update the Patient Experience Program too if things change.
- ☐ **Have a plan to report back –** Don't let their input vanish into a black hole. Show that it is valuable and respected by having a report-back plan before the engagement. If you are writing a report, make sure they get a copy. If it is a survey, you can put the results in a newsletter. What was the impact of the engagement on the initiative?
- ☐ **Cancer is emotional –** Consider having a counsellor at the engagement.
- ☐ **Prepare your Partners –** Give them anything to read well in advance. Make sure you give them practical information such as parking instructions, saving receipts, and if you will provide food.

Remember to update the Patient Experience Program if things change.

BC CANCER
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DON'T

- ☐ **Use Jargon or Technical Language** – If complex terms or acronyms are needed, give partners a glossary in advance. Remind the Partners to ask for clarification when they hear jargon/acronyms. This is very helpful when the engagement also includes health care professionals.
- ☐ **Hold a pointless engagement** - Is someone actually going to listen to and use the results of the engagement? Are there actually decisions left to influence?
- ☐ **Ignore team readiness** – Are some team members reluctant to engage? If so, consider reducing the "depth" of the engagement.

  Rather than a half day meeting or a weekend-long open house, how about a 2-hour discussion group?

  Instead of a 2-hour discussion group, how about a survey?

Helpful Resources:

- Patient Voices Network. (n.d.). *Demystifying authentic patient engagement: Practical tips for success*. Retrieved from:

  https://patientvoicesbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/PVNTipsBaltimore.pdf
- Vancouver Coastal Health, Community Engagement Department (2016). *How to engage patients and public advisors: A guide for staff*. Retrieved from:

  http://mpap.vch.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2017/07/How-to-Engage-Patient-and-Public-Advisors-A-Guide-for-Staff-FINAL2.pdf
- Healthcare Improvement Scotland. (2014). *The participation toolkit: supporting patient focus and public involvement in NHS Scotland*. Retrieved from:

  http://scottishhealthcouncil.org/toolkit.aspx