COLLECTIVE INSIGHT
Newsletter
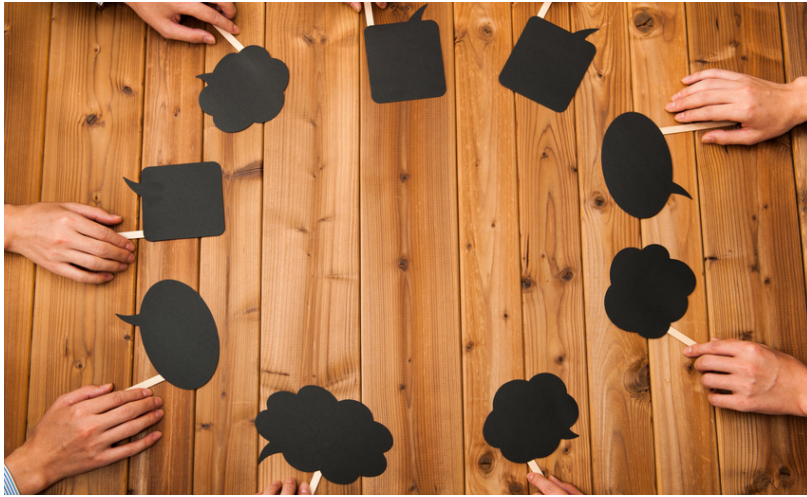
Making Engagement Work
Topic of the Month: Don't Delay Engagement

February Newsletter Topics:
- Don't Delay!
- Engagement Tip of the Month
- Early Engagement Services
- Engagement Spotlight -- Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative: Advanced Engagement

"Once the program is started, we will start meeting. I just want to have something ready to show everyone."

"Engagement is part of the plan. We will start as soon as we have some ideas on paper."

"As soon as we get funding, we will get the engagement group going."

Does any of this sound familiar? Many people wait to start engagement until they are "ready." The problem is that by the time you are ready, it is already too late.

We will let you in on a little secret: you rarely feel ready. And if you do, you are too late.

Utilizing community engagement only after a project or idea is formed is a risky move. Some of us tried this exact strategy 20 years ago and people were so mad their response was officially named a "revolt." The good news for you is our humbling experience is well documented **here**. Take a read and learn from it.

So, we get it. You are waiting until you have "it" just right. You don't want to look disorganized. Unfortunately, it's not until you start the engagement process that you realize, inevitably, that something in your thinking is fatally flawed.

So, turn that thinking upside down: allow your desire to get it right to be the catalyst for engagement rather than the speed bump or stop sign. It's time to recognize that engaging the community in the design of your idea or project can be immensely valuable and efficient.

Need assistance designing engagement?
Collective Insight's Training and Support Division can help. Visit Us at **collectiveinsightllc.com**

We are here to tell you: Don't Wait.

As soon as you know you want to do something, anything, ask yourself, "who is directly impacted by my idea? Who are the experts?" And, when we say experts, we don't simply mean individuals with degrees and certificates. We mean those who experience your topic, whether they want to or not. We mean those who will be forced to live with the policy or research findings that result from your work, whether your methods or data included their perspective, or not. Connecting with these people early in the process provides valuable insights that should help shape your idea and build a better foundation for success.

Many people delay their engagement activities because they simply don't know where to start or they feel overwhelmed by the notion. We get that. Building trust with communities takes investment. It takes planning, showing up, and following up, and it takes doing all of this consistently. That said, just start somewhere. Have a conversation, drink coffee, or break bread with a community leader (yes, this can happen virtually). These conversations will shed light on who may value your work and who may have an incentive to help you further engage communities in your work.

Connecting with community partners who have aligned goals will help you identify and build on the community engagement already occurring and the trusted relationships already established. With that said, coming to meetings prepared to ask genuine, open-ended questions, being humble, listening, learning, and creating mutually beneficial projects will always need room on your "to do" list.

The good news: the fruits of your labor will not go unnoticed. And, the confidence in your findings will be unwavering -- for you and for those most impacted by your work.

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Reasons You Should Start
Engagement Early

- **Expand** your knowledge of community need
- **Avoid** pitfalls experienced by others
- **Identify** and build upon assets that already exist
- **Utilize** feedback to shape program or research design
- **Establish** trust with communities most impacted
- **Create** outreach methods that actually work
- **Locate** ambassadors to share and apply your findings

Engagement Tip of the Month
Incentivize Effectively

We all are busy people, and we all make decisions, every day, on what to prioritize and what to leave for tomorrow (or next year). Communities you seek to engage are no different. In fact, if you want to involve individuals who face oppression, poverty, chronic conditions, or other significant challenges--- simply surviving is the priority. Your project is probably #82 on their list.

Your work is your priority to you, and because of this, you may be assuming it is priority for those you want to engage. That could be a mistake. Take time to work with community leaders to align your priorities with the priorities of those you seek to engage. Tease out the financial and non-financial incentives required for people to show up. For instance, not just providing transportation, food, and honorariums, but also ensuring your project's goals or research questions are important to those most impacted.

Engagement Spotlight

Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative: Advanced Engagement

Collective Insight has been approved for funding through the Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Awards program, an initiative of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). PCORI is an independent, nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 to fund research that will provide patients, their caregivers and clinicians with the evidence-based information needed to make better-informed healthcare decisions.

Erin McGaffigan, PhD, Principal of Collective Insight, will lead the Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative: Advanced Engagement (EACB-26961) Project in partnership with Marc Cohen, PhD, LeadingAge LTSS Center @UMass Boston. The project will build upon lessons learned from the PCORI-funded Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative (19514-LTSS). The Advanced Engagement project will shift the research paradigm so older adults, including those from underrepresented communities, are seen as research partners, rather than just research subjects. To do so, the Collaborative is building capacity on multiple fronts, including by offering educational resources and training to students, researchers, academic leaders, funders, and older adults.

The Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative: Advanced Engagement is guided by multiple engagement structures, including an Older Adult Subcommittee, a Steering Committee composed of older adults, funders, researchers, and academic representatives, as well as a Project Management Team that includes Older Adult and Student Advisors. The partners in these groups are engaged at every step of the project, from designing tools to hosting educational podcasts. The Collaborative is always seeking to expand the diversity of perspectives and lived experience represented within its many engagement structures. If you or someone you know is interested in bringing your lived experience to this project, complete this form **here.** We are so excited to see how our engagement grows in this new award. Congratulations to all of our partners!

Click **here** to learn about the Aging PCOR Learning Collaborative!

Looking for Help with Engagement:

Engagement can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be that way. Collective Insight can support your engagement efforts no matter where you are in the process. For instance:

Need proposal development assistance to fund your engagement project? Learn about our proposal development services **here**.

Need to learn what matters most to those impacted by your work? Learn about our community needs assessment services **here**.

Lets Talk. Email us at info@collectinsight.com

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