

ARE WE A COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABLE INSTITUTION?

Important Considerations to Discuss as a Team:

DEFINING & UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY

Which community (or communities) are we in service of?
Who does it consist of?
What is our proximity to this community?



VALUING COMMUNITY EXPERTISE

Do we value our community's expertise?
What opportunities have we created for their participation & partnership?
How do we compensate them for their time and contribution?



RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Do we invest the time needed to build trust and authentic relationships with community?
Do we acknowledge and repair any previously inflicted harms?



ACCURATE NARRATIVES

How often and how well do we share data and information with our community partners?
How do they inform this data and the story behind the numbers?



COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

How is the community positioned to make decisions for themselves and for their community?
How does this live within our own institutional leadership, culture, practice, structure & decision making?



Are We a Community Accountable Institution? Infographic and Workbook

Introduction + Purpose:

For many years, institutions have been accountable to funders, donors, and other highly resourced power structures. More recently, however, there has been a much-needed shift to focus accountability on the relationship between institutions and the people they serve. This means that the institutions must take account of the needs, concerns, capacities and expertise of community members, while also communicating information effectively and sharing power in decision making.

This tool serves as a practice exploration workbook to help you assess, measure and improve your institutions level of

accountability to community, by identifying which areas of your work may demonstrate the *least accountable* practices as often seen in more Traditional Service Delivery models, and which areas of practice are *extremely accountable* demonstrating a Community Centered Support service approach.



Step 1

Defining and Understanding Community

1. Which community (or communities) are we in service of?
2. Who does it consist of?
3. What is our proximity to this community?

Working with your team, consider the first round of questions in the infographic (left). Journal your answers independently, then discuss as a team.

Work through the next set of questions to further assess your understanding of community.

- ◇ How do you know that you are in service of this community?
- ◇ Does this community know that you are in service of them? How do they know?
- ◇ What is the ongoing relationship and connections that you have with the community?

- ◇ How are you already, or how do you become, a resource for the community?

Step 2

Valuing Community Expertise

1. Do we value our community's expertise?
2. What opportunities have we created for their participation & partnership?
3. How do we compensate them for their time & contribution?

Working with your team, consider the first round of questions in the infographic (left). Journal your answers independently, then discuss as a team.

As you further explore the value placed on community expertise, the following prompts can provide deeper analysis, as well as help you get started:

Do we know what the community's areas of expertise are?

YES



- ◇ How do we demonstrate that we value the community expertise?
- ◇ How are we creating the environment that supports everyone's full participation?
- ◇ How do we receive community feedback?
- ◇ How do we integrate community feedback into our practice and approach?

NO



A few tips to help you learn more about your community's expertise:

- ◇ [Participatory Asset Mapping Toolkit](#)
- ◇ [Asset Mapping Toolkit Clear Impact](#)
- ◇ [Video: Asset Mapping: What is it?](#)
- ◇ Also, once you are engaging community, consider developing a simple survey to generate feedback, coupled with a stipend for participation.

Step 3

Relationship Building

1. Do we invest the time needed to build trust & authentic relationships with community?
2. Do we acknowledge & repair any previously inflicted harms?

Working with your team, consider the first round of questions in the infographic (left). Journal your answers independently, then discuss as a team.

As you explore these areas of (a) trust building and (b) acknowledging and repairing harm, consider the following prompts to deepen the discussion:

Investing the time needed to build trust:

- ◇ What types of spaces are you creating for authentic conversations with community?
- ◇ In authentic conversation with community, how are you creating the environment that supports community members' full participation? (e.g., are you providing childcare, food, refreshments, etc.?)
- ◇ How are you nurturing the relationships you have in community? (e.g., do you set aside time to attend events sponsored by community members?, do you offer a range of ways to support community-identified gatherings, initiatives, campaigns, etc., including financial and technical support resources?)

Acknowledging and repairing harm:

- ◇ Have you researched and assessed the harm that your institution has created in this community and perhaps others?
- ◇ How have you shared this history thoughtfully with community?
- ◇ Have you created spaces to acknowledge the distrust that stems from the harms done to communities?

Step 4

Accurate Narratives

1. How often & how well do we share data & information with our community partners?
2. How do they inform this data & the story behind the numbers?

Engage in full team discussion as you engage these initial prompt questions.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that the narratives we hold and express are accurate. Engage the following prompts for deeper discussion:

- ◇ Who gets to decide about what data is gathered, analyzed, etc.?

- ◇ What or whose narrative or purpose does it fulfill?
- ◇ Does this information demonstrate an accurate narrative about the people and families it represents? Here, *accurate* means as determined by community.

Step 5

Community Governance and Accountability

1. How is the community positioned to make decisions for themselves & for their community?
2. How does this live within our own institutional leadership, culture, practice, structure & decision making?

Consider partnering up to discuss these initial prompt questions and then, engage as a larger group. Be intentional about creating a space where teammates feel free to express their thoughts on internal culture & dynamics, regardless of their role/position.

It is important to continuously assess community governance and our accountability to those we are in service of. Use the following prompts to explore additional ways to demonstrate this:

- ◇ Are community members represented in various decision-making bodies within your institution?
- ◇ How are community members' voices and presence valued with the decision-making bodies? (e.g., do community members have voting power, veto power, ability to nominate officers, ability to determine organizational strategy and approach, etc.)
- ◇ Are you engaging community members in assessing individual and institutional performance? (e.g., how do your performance evaluations include community feedback, how does your strategic plan incorporate community participation in the creation of the plan, how do your organizational impact metrics significantly weigh community feedback?)