

CULTURALLY COMPETENT COMMUNITY BUILDING

A Few Guidelines

Our communities are gathering places for people of numerous backgrounds and cultures. Beyond ways in which we might identify ourselves, it is essential to remember that each person is unique and that we are speaking to people rather than populations or groups.

Here are some guidelines to consider when doing work in community:

LISTEN. Being attentive to someone's story and what matters to them, and allowing them to share who they are is essential for building trust.



LEARN. Be curious about other people and educate yourself around cultural customs and holidays, traditions, behaviors and values. Encourage people to learn about each other.

ASK. If you are unsure about what might work, or what's acceptable ask—not by using YOU, but by using "I" statements ("I want to know what would be the best food for the meeting")



WELCOME. Warmly welcome everyone to any meeting, even if they arrive late. Feeling welcomed creates a sense of belonging.

SHARE. A fundamental practice in culturally competent community building is based in sharing—a meal, stories, leadership, time to talk,

designing a project or program.



REVISIT. Take another look at ways you are showing up – from your presence to the language you are using, and may demand that you use different terms or try alternative approaches to engaging people at a meeting (e.g. partner conversations, small groups, non-verbal/non-written exercises)



SHIFT. Trying things in a new way is important. (not everyone responds to communications in the same way: different people may be inspired by an e-mail or a phone call, others by a flyer or a personal invitation)

CHANGE. Reaching different communities often requires more than just shifting how you do things, but completely changing them...and changing your schedule and yourself. For instance, the time, structure, pace, and leadership of meetings might need to change...or even the idea of having meetings.



PARTNER. Work as a partner, not a teacher or expert. Creating a team representing different communities and cultures is a powerful practice to learn and

communicate across cultures.



COMMIT. One of the most powerful cultural competency practices is demonstrating that you care about individual and community relationships by sticking around.

