

A photograph of a woman with curly hair looking down at a sleeping baby. The image is split into two vertical panels. The left panel has a blue overlay, and the right panel has a white overlay. The woman is wearing a gold hoop earring and a necklace. The baby is wearing a white shirt with colorful floral patterns.

Sustainability: Building Partnerships, Capacity & Capabilities

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Transformational Community Engagement: Working with Community to Advance Health Equity

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HEALTH EQUITY SOLUTIONS

About State Health and Value Strategies

State Health and Value Strategies (SHVS) assists states in their efforts to transform health and healthcare by providing targeted technical assistance to state officials and agencies. The program is a grantee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, led by staff at Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs. The program connects states with experts and peers to undertake healthcare transformation initiatives. By engaging state officials, the program provides lessons learned, highlights successful strategies, and brings together states with experts in the field. Learn more at www.shvs.org.

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About Health Equity Solutions



Mission:

To advance health equity through anti-racist policies and practices.



Vision:

For every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Level Setting: Defining Key Terms



“Community engagement” can describe a wide range of activities. Below is how SHVS defines key terms.

Community Engagement

Collaborative processes between organizations/institutions and communities impacted by their policies, programs, or practices to influence decisions and actions through the mutually beneficial and bidirectional exchange of resources, expertise, and information.

Outreach

Activities and processes related to raising awareness, disseminating information, or training external partners to connect their constituents or members with a service, program, or information (e.g., Medicaid enrollment services). Outreach is more one-sided, with a goal of conveying clear messages across diverse populations. Effective outreach is a part of strategic communication

Community Engagement & Health Equity



Community engagement is key to equity, but not equivalent to equity.

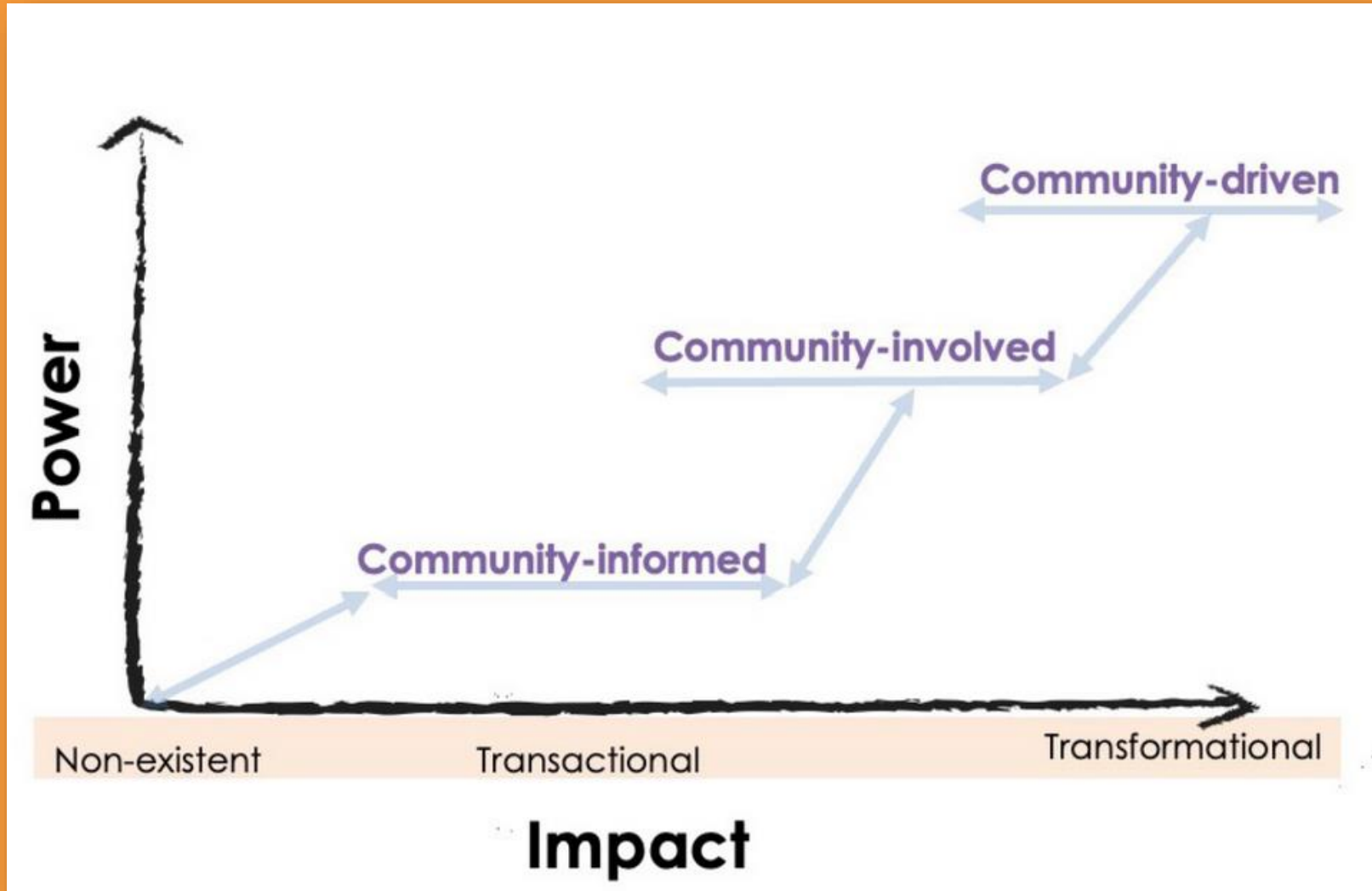
Why?

- ✓ Fosters trust and mutual respect
- ✓ Helps break unforeseen or unintended barriers to health
- ✓ Improves efficacy by ensuring programs respond to the experiences of the people they impact

How?

- ✓ Intentionally centers equity
- ✓ Diverse participants
- ✓ Addresses power dynamics

The Spectrum of Engagement



From Transactional to Transformational



Transactional Community Engagement

- ✓ Engages communities through commentary on near-final products or narrow questions that are often characterized by single interactions
- ✓ Results in superficial changes to a policy or program that fails to meet community needs
- ✓ Few resources are required
- ✓ Results in minimal learning for the organization
- ✓ Can cause fatigue among community partners and advocates, and devalues the feedback obtained



Transformational Community Engagement

- ✓ Forms sustainable relationships
- ✓ Operates with transparency
- ✓ Results in changes to policies and/or practices
- ✓ Engagement includes, but is not limited to, participants learning how their input was or was not incorporated and why
- ✓ Requires time, organizational commitment, resources, and readiness

Understanding Impact

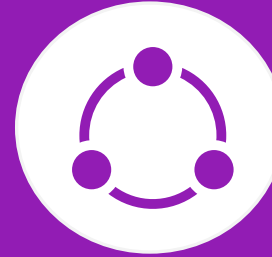
Transactional Community Engagement



- ✓ Checking a box
- ✓ Narrow engagement
- ✓ Seeking input on near-final product
- ✓ Results in superficial or technical change

Challenges: may lead to community fatigue, lack of trust

Transformational Community Engagement



- ✓ Sustainable relationships
- ✓ Transparency and "feedback loop"
- ✓ Results in cultural and structural change

Challenges: resource intensive, requires institutional commitment and readiness



Understanding Power

Minimal Power Sharing:



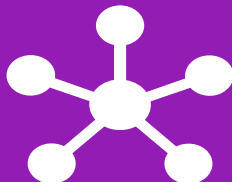
- ✓ Ignores differences in power
- ✓ Addressing power is beyond the engagement's scope of purpose
- ✓ Otherwise known as community outreach

Some Power Sharing:



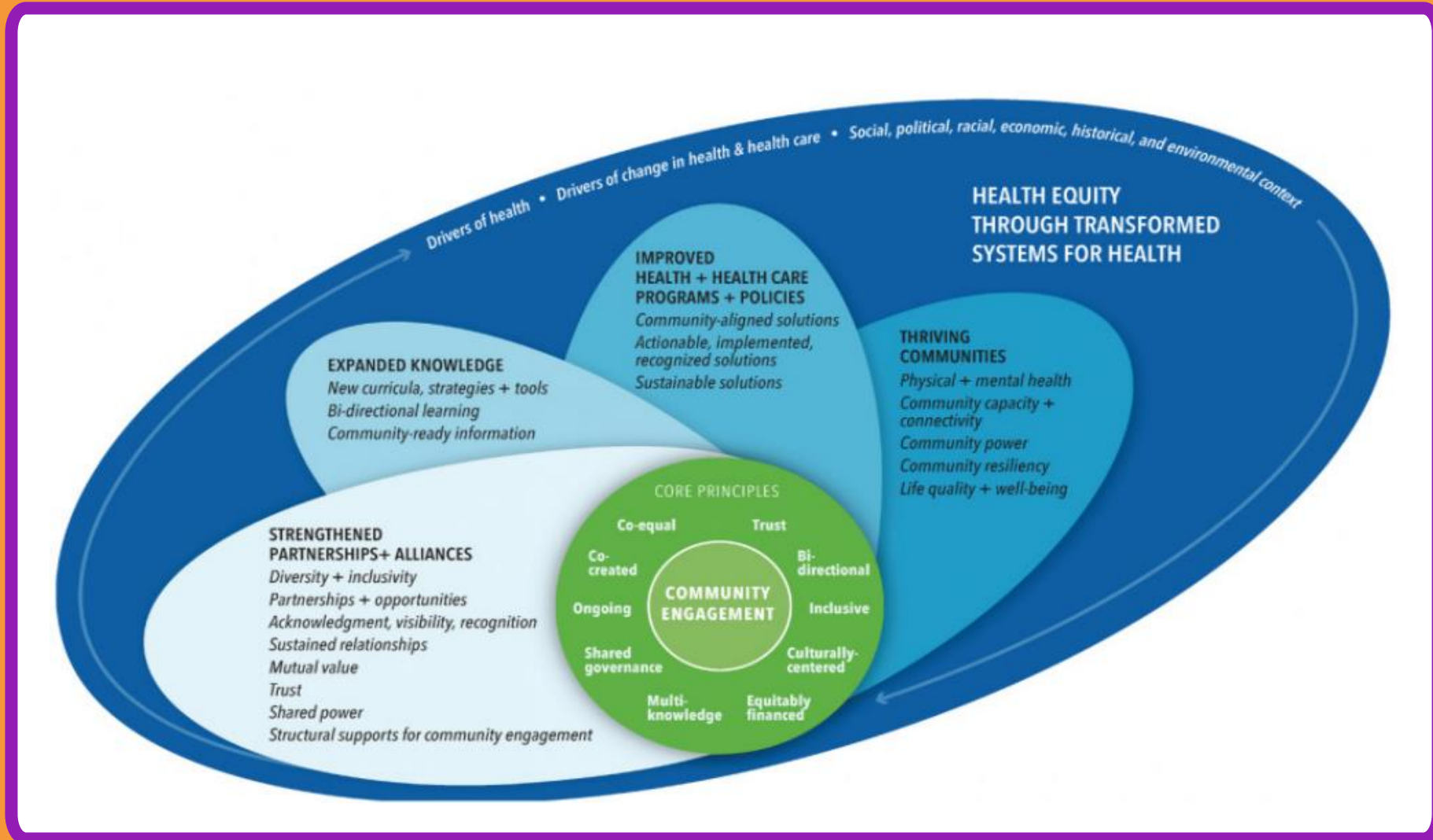
- ✓ Recognizes power dynamics without fully addressing them
- ✓ The agency works with communities and trusted messengers to align the needs of the community
- ✓ Community knowledge and expertise is recognized

Maximal Power Sharing:



- ✓ Acknowledges traditional power dynamics by enacting processes to diminish power imbalances
- ✓ Community voices are recognized, treated as experts and lead the agenda
- ✓ Community members collaborate to form ideas and prioritize issues

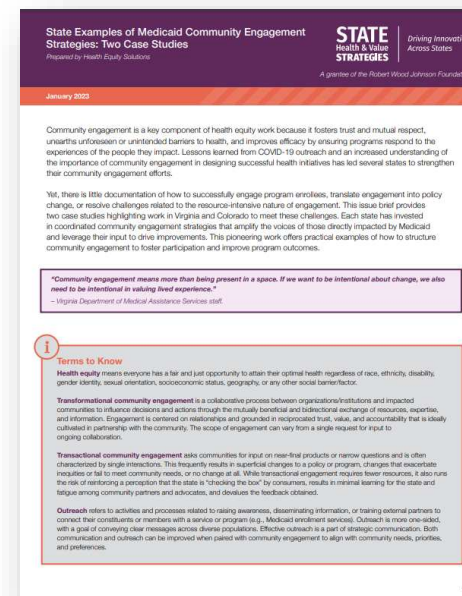
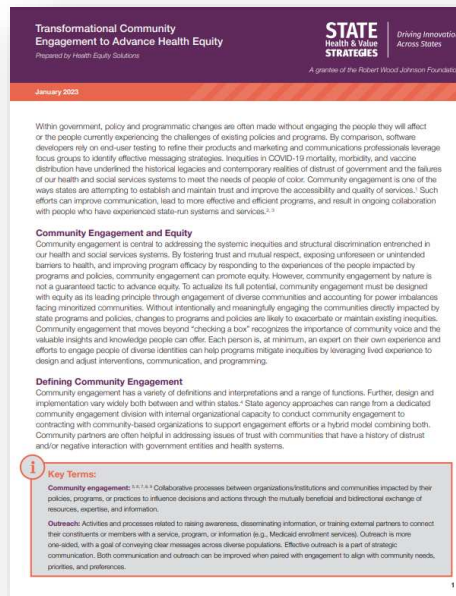
Planning and Evaluation



SHVS Resources

For more information on transformational community engagement, see two recently published issue briefs:

- [Transformational Community Engagement to Advance Health Equity](#)
- [State Examples of Medicaid Community Engagement Strategies: Two Case Studies](#)



Discussion: Small Groups

Count Off!

- How do you see this spectrum in your work?
- What are strengths and opportunities for growth in your community engagement work?
- How are you assessing equity?

Strategies and Tactics: Strengthened Partnerships and Alliance

Strategies:

- ✓ Recognizing participants' time and expertise
- ✓ Creating spaces exclusively for people with lived experience

- ✓ Consider who is and is not “at the table” and reach out to communities that are not represented including consideration of intersecting identities
- ✓ Clearly communicate that community voice is valued

Tactics:

Strategies and Tactics: Expanded Knowledge

Strategies:

- ✓ Consider cultural and language access when sharing information—who delivers the information and how is it delivered?
- ✓ Recognize communities as experts on their own needs and acknowledge learning is multi-directional

- ✓ Collaborate with community members to establish goals and track progress both in re: engagement AND programmatic change
- ✓ Embed multi-directional knowledge building into engagement and ensure participants have the resources they need to comfortably participate, especially in spaces with other stakeholders

Tactics:

Strategies and Tactics: Improve Health and Health Care Systems Knowledge

Strategies:

- ✓ Invite community to identify and define problems and work cooperatively to define and evaluate success
- ✓ Identify gaps in program delivery

- ✓ Require all staff to participate in cultural humility training and create a culture of openness and learning
- ✓ Publicly track the impact of community input, even when not used

Tactics:

Strategies and Tactics: Thriving Communities

Strategies:

- ✓ Collect demographic data, including detailed REL, SOGI, and disability data
- ✓ Share power and resources with communities vs. simply acknowledging community power and expertise

- ✓ Ensure assessment considers what success looks like from both organizational and community perspectives
- ✓ Ensure community engagement results in change and communicate measurables and timebound goals to participants

Tactics:

Thank you!

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