

Diversity in Patient and Family Engagement

Engagements should be welcoming, inclusive, and safe, honoring the diverse experiences and identities of all participants. This includes, but is not limited to, people who are experiencing housing instability, older adults, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, or members of specific cultural communities.



Hard-to-Reach or Hardly-Reached?

These are groups often called “hard to reach,” but they are not. They are “hardly reached.” When systems expect these groups to fit into our ways of working, we *make* them appear “hard to reach.” It requires more planning to design engagements that work for them.



Considering Accessibility and Safety

We tend to think of accessibility as a question of ramps, safety rails and mobility support. But for some groups it is far more complex. Are they likely to be comfortable travelling out of their neighborhood? Will translation be a concern? Are you asking them to come to an institution they may distrust? Can they afford to travel to you?

If you aren’t fully sure of how to support their safety and accessibility, ask someone who might better know the group you are engaging. Always reassure people that speaking freely won’t compromise their current or future care, no matter what they say.



Finding Your Own Partners

If there is a particular group you want to engage, it may be more productive to find your own partners. Still, reach out to the Patient & Family Partnerships and Experience Program, as we can help you with other aspects of planning your engagement and provide support to strengthen your partnership with the partners.



Groups and Representatives

Sometimes it can be easier and more effective to start by connecting with organizations that represent the communities you hope to hear from. Representatives from these organizations are often familiar with institutional settings and are usually happy to meet at your offices. While the ultimate goal is to speak directly with community members, working with these organizations can be a helpful first step.

Representatives can also help connect you with people, provide comfortable space and even be present at the engagement itself to increase feelings of safety.

The population may change, but the questions you should ask yourself do not.

Ask yourself:

- ☐ What time would work best for this community? It might be outside typical working hours, so consider whether you can accommodate their preferences.
- ☐ What location would be easiest and most comfortable? It may not be in your building or institution. It may be at a space where they already meet and feel at ease.
- ☐ Is there someone who should be there to increase a feeling of support or lend legitimacy? Case manager, Elder, advocacy organization representative, head of a department?
- ☐ What other supports does this population need? Respite care, diet, ground floor, Elder to open the event, a counsellor, cultural norms to follow?
- ☐ Could there be any unintended financial barriers for participants? For example, might a teleconference incur charges on a pay-as-you-go phone, or require them to print documents?
- ☐ Is there something they may be afraid of, such as compromising their future care, their doctor hearing what they said, their community being unimpressed that they are cooperating with you?
- ☐ Are there literacy or language concerns?



Helpful Resources to Support Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Engagement:

- [Culturally Safe Engagement: What Matters to Indigenous \(First Nations, Metis and Inuit\) Patient Partners Companion Guide, Health Quality BC](#)
- [Indigenous Engagement & Cultural Safety Guidebook: A Resource for Primary Care Networks, First Nations Health Authority & Ministry of Health](#)
- [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Elevating the Voices of all in British Columbia, Health Quality BC](#)
- [Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement – A Guide for Practitioners, SFU Wosk Centre for Dialogue](#)
- [Patients as Partners, BC Ministry of Health. \(2018\). *Mental Health / Substance Use Care Engagement Tip Sheet*.](#)
- [Patients as Partners, BC Ministry of Health. \(2018\). *Seniors with complex medical conditions engagement tip sheet*.](#)
- [WHO framework for meaningful engagement of people living with noncommunicable diseases, and mental health and neurological conditions](#)

Questions?

Contact the PFPX Team to help plan engagement that's inclusive, respectful, and impactful.

Email: patientexp@bccancer.bc.ca

Fill out a [request form](#)