**Exercise: Planning Your Engagement Strategies**

***Scenario:*** You are the leaders of a collaborative initiative that is focused on improving employment opportunities for low-income people in Gotham, a large city in the United States. Your initiative is particularly focused on one neighborhood in Gotham that has historically had bad relationships with the city’s police force. Residents in this neighborhood—which has one of the highest unemployment rates in the city—complain that they are targeted by police more so than other communities and therefore receive more fines and jail time. This issue has been highlighted by residents of this neighborhood as a big part of the high unemployment rate—residents who have been incarcerated have a harder time finding jobs and the high number of fees makes it difficult to become financially stable.

Your task is to work with residents of this community to design a strategy to improve their relationship with the police force. Your aim is to have the residents co-lead this strategy with your collaborative.

**Step 1: Complete this chart by brainstorming possible engagement strategies, as well as how you will incorporate the information or lessons from this engagement into your collaboration.**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A. “WHO”**  What community groups are you engaging? | **B. “WHY”**  What is your goal for engaging them? | **C. “HOW”**  What strategies are you using to engage them? | **D. “WHAT”**  How is their input/  participation incorporated into the initiative? | **E. “DEPTH”**  At what level on the spectrum are they engaged? |
| *Residents of a particular neighborhood in Gotham* | *To improve their relationship with the police to help increase employment opportunities* |  |  | *Co-lead* |

**Instructions:**

* Use the chart paper at your table to brainstorm options for column “C” and “D”.
* Once you have a good list, decided on one or two strategies you think are best.
* Be prepared to have one group member report out about your decision.

**Things to consider/discuss:**

* How well do your engagement strategies in Column C align with your engagement goals in Column B?
* How do your engagement strategies align with the overall goal of increasing employment?
* Does your proposed strategy meet the criteria of “co-leadership” identified in Column E?

**Step 2: List and analyze your assumptions about the strategy you designed.**

**Instructions:**

* Using the strategy you identified in Step 1 (if you identified more than one, choose one), list out all the assumptions you may have about that strategy on your chart paper.
  + For example, if your strategy requires holding community meetings, an assumption would be that residents would attend a meeting.
* After spending a few minutes listing out assumptions, examine those assumptions with the following questions to guide you:
  + Are they any assumptions you think might be false? If so, what does this mean for your work?
  + Who are we not reaching with these strategies that we should be?
  + Are there root causes of the problem we are trying to solve that we are ignoring?
  + What barriers to working with community members do these assumptions reveal?
* After discussing your assumptions, make any refinements necessary to your proposed strategy.
* Be prepared to have one group member report out about your changes and discussion.