

The Population Health Innovation Lab's COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN ACTION

Spotlight on Community Engagement: Live Healthy Napa County



Napa County's Accountable Community for Health, known locally as Live Healthy Napa County (LHNC), is a public-private-community partnership working to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of every member of its community. To make this actionable, LHNC and the diverse partners it brings together created a shared vision and a [Community Health Improvement Plan \(CHIP\)](#). The CHIP domains are inclusive of several upstream approaches: improve respect and social inclusion, decrease food insecurity, and address housing and transportation—a number of factors that influence the burden of chronic disease in the local population.

LHNC aims to disrupt the status quo and shift decision-making power to the community members most impacted by the issues it seeks to address. Participating in the Population Health Innovation Lab's Art of Hosting (AoH) Training and the subsequent Community of Practice (CoP) allowed LHNC to reimagine engagement of the community and take tangible steps to "organize with—instead of for—its residents." One example of such organizing was the use of an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) workshop to assist in the finalizing of planned action for the CHIP's Respect and Social Inclusion domain.

What are participants saying about implementation of tools and techniques learned in the Art of Hosting/Community of Practice?

"For Napa County, this process has been a true test of the growth-mindset, and required all individuals involved to set aside the outdated assumption that people who are in a paid capacity hold the most knowledge. What has become apparent over the past year is that the residents of Napa County, who have expertise that can only come from lived experience, are in fact the most valuable asset of all. It has also been a wonderful reminder that, even as we grapple with health inequities and are faced with an incredible amount of work to be done, there is grace to be found in [the] act of trying. The simple choice to begin these conversations, and open up spaces to those who are not typically invited to the table, has already begun the process of healing.

We continue to nurture these relationships and avenues of communication, as we believe that the only true path towards equity is one that has room for everyone to walk."

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LHNC invited community residents, non-profit partners, and Napa County staff to participate in the ABCD workshop, which occurred during a May 2019 LHNC convening. The 37 participants that attended identified over 200 local assets. Participants then also engaged in follow-on dialogue to brainstorm about how to connect and mobilize what was already accessible in the community (the identified assets) to increase respect and social inclusion.

While rich conversation was one positive outcome of the exercise, it was also important because it allowed workshop attendees to identify additional needs to inform action: 1) conduct learning conversations with a variety of local groups and associations to deepen relationships, discover groups' passions, identify mutual interests, and better understand and invite alignment and engagement; and 2) engage more Spanish-speaking residents to ensure authentic community connection, inclusion, and resident-driven action.



Engagement of LHNC participants and community members during multiple events in 2019.

This initial asset mapping workshop led to over 25 learning conversations with groups such as Legacy Youth Project, Teens Connect, Puertas Abiertas, and Innovations Community Center. Using the associations identified in the asset mapping activity, LHNC participants engaged with groups that are often overlooked during community planning processes. **One group in particular, whose members were unhoused and seeking mental health services, all agreed that their learning conversation was the first time anyone from a large community organization had ever asked about their experience.** This group also had specific and fully formed ideas about what would increase their comfort and visibility in their own community. What LHNC gained from all of these experiences was a very clear realization: “Our communities know what they need, and it is our job is to listen.”

Engaging Spanish-speakers in an ABCD workshop was equally revealing. Fifteen Spanish-speaking parents, recruited by Cope Family Resource Center, attended a second asset mapping activity. This meeting was held in

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the evening, with dinner and childcare provided, and yielded a completely different map of assets from the activity that was initially conducted with English-speaking participants. This confirmed the need to seek out not only Spanish-speaking community members, but also those who cannot attend meetings during the day, or as part of their regular job.

As work evolved to strengthen the CHIP strategies and identify ways to measure change, LHNC continued to improve new community engagement techniques to understand, integrate, and empower resident perspective and engagement. In Calistoga, over 100 participants were brought together by non-profit partners and parent groups to explore respect and social inclusion in their community. This was a bilingual event that brought together all ages in order to identify what made people feel welcome in their hometown and what things made them feel like they did not belong. A graphic recorder was used to capture the meeting's outputs as shown in the image below. As LHNC began to internalize the idea that a real shift was needed in engagement practices, it also conducted a Power Ladder exercise. This allowed participants to analyze their own organizations and the extent to which residents held decision-making power in their organization's processes.



Graphic Recording from Calistoga Town Hall, November 2019

All of the community engagement and qualitative data gathered helped to finalize the 2019-2024 [Community Health Improvement Plan](#). This plan will be used to as a foundation for the design and testing of future community projects and initiatives. In reflecting on the ABCD process, one LHNC staff person explained: "Everything felt good about this process, and all of the good things are also incredibly challenging. It feels right to begin these conversations about how to shift decision-making power to impacted community members... Be prepared to be moved by the amazing work that your community does every day, without recognition."