



Community and Stakeholder Engagement for RCO's
Extension Learning March 2022

The Community Toolbox

Hello everyone! It's Mitzi from Creative Thought Consulting Group. I had the pleasure of meeting many of you at our March session of the learning collaborative and will get to know you all better at the April session when I facilitate. In the meantime, welcome to extension learning! This is the segment each month where we will take a deeper dive into learning and expand on some of the concepts learned in the workshops.

To kick things off, we are going to explore the Community Toolbox. This is a free online resource developed and managed by the University of Kansas Center for Community Health & Development. It exists to support individuals engaged in community development and provides step by step guidance on a number of tools and skills needed to bring about community change. Some of you may already be familiar with this resource, while for others, this is new to you. The toolbox is continuously updated, so no matter your experience with this toolbox, there is always something in there for everyone!

Take a minute now to head over to the [Community Toolbox](#) and browse around. Maybe read an article or two that interests you. As you browse the toolbox, consider the following questions:

- What tools are new to you?
- What tools are you already familiar with?
- How do you imagine using some of these tools in your engagement & advocacy efforts?
- How have you already used some of the tools in your engagement activities?
- How would you replicate your successes with these tools?
- What creative strategies would you use to enhance them?
- How do you envision yourself using these enhanced tools the next time you engage your community?

Community Toolbox Reflections

Now that you have had the chance to browse the Toolbox, let's talk about some of the features that will be helpful in your work.

When you enter the toolbox, pause and consider the breadth and depth of the resources. For example, in this month's workshop, you learned about different models of community change. When you look at models for promoting community change that are included in the Community Toolbox, you can see there are 18 different models presented. The great thing about this is that it allows communities to identify the model that best fits their focus versus funneling all communities into the same model. So, for example, communities working to address substance use or substance use prevention, may follow after SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration), and utilize the Strategic Prevention Framework as a model for community change. Other communities that are more focused on physical health may select the Health Impact Assessment as a better model to focus their needs.

Another great feature of the Community Toolbox is that it provides resources for all stages of community change. If you take the strategic prevention framework for example, this model talks about the community change process as including the following steps: 1) Community Assessment; 2) Capacity Building; 3) Strategic Planning; 4) Implementation; and 5) Evaluation. The model also highlights how sustainability and cultural competence are integral to each of these areas. If you look through the Community Toolbox, you will find in-depth resources on all of these areas. So, no matter what stage of community development you are in, there are resources to support you along the way!

Other highlights of the Community Toolbox are the toolkits. There are a number of toolkits in the toolbox that I hope you came across as you were browsing. These toolkits are beneficial because they focus on helping you build a skill that will enhance your ability to bring change about in your community! They provide guidance and specific instructions on how to do things such as: increasing the participation of stakeholders in community change; advocating for change; influencing policy development and creating coalitions and partnerships. With these user-friendly toolkits, you can accelerate the progress of your community initiatives and empower your community to lead their own change.

For those who learn better by participating in a training, the Community Toolbox also offers courses! The material is presented as web-based, self-paced learning that participants can access at their convenience. The courses are free and run 30 - 45 minutes on average. Some of the course topics include assuring engagement in community health improvement efforts, assuring collaboration during implementation and identifying community health needs and assets. If there are tools you would like to quickly get up to speed with, check out the available courses and get started!

A final component of the Community Toolbox I want to pull your attention to is the databases of best practices. This resource is awesome! It provides a list of databases that highlight best practice in community development. If you are looking to find an intervention that has had success in other communities that are similar to yours and that are addressing similar concerns, check out these databases. Not only can it help you generate ideas of how to intervene, but the interventions are also backed by research.

I hope your trip through the Community Toolbox has inspired you to action! It is an excellent resource used worldwide. It is a favorite of mine that I hope will quickly become a favorite of yours if it is not already.

Now consider taking that next step. Identify a tool you can use to facilitate change in your community and implement it today!