

# What does it mean to be “guided by the community they serve?”



The Community Foundation has prioritized funding those organizations that are guided by the community they serve. To examine what that means, please see the diagram below. The *Wheel of Participation*, and includes four quadrants: inform, consult, participate, and empower. Within each quadrant, there are a range of approaches as described below.



## Inform

- Ranges from sharing only the information you are required to share, to sharing information you want to share, to sharing the information that the community wants or needs.
- Can look like: public notices, newsletters, press releases, email blasts, website and social media posts

## Consult

- Ranges from placing the responsibility on the community to respond to information that was shared, to creating a customer-oriented service where you seek and welcome responses from the community, to engaging in active discussion with the community before taking action
- Can look like: public meetings, surveys, engaging social media posts, interviews, citizen panels, focus groups

## Participate

- Ranges from inviting the community to make proposals, to solving problems in partnership with the community, to allowing communities to make their own decisions on select issues
- Can look like: advisory committees, stakeholder groups, political support to delegate power

## Empower

- Ranges from delegating limited decision-making powers in a particular process or project, to facilitating a community group or agency to provide a service on your behalf, to passing significant decision-making power on to the community
- Can look like: political support to delegate power, engaging community groups to provide specific services, leadership and boards reflecting the community you serve

Organizations will not always operate in the same quadrant for all their work. For organizations to be guided by the communities they serve, they should be moving beyond the inform quadrant.

In your grant application, the Community Foundation wants to understand where your organization is on this wheel and specific examples. The Community Foundation is looking for a genuine commitment to understanding the importance of community guidance and shifting the way your organization functions based on the community you serve.

Source:

[Davidson, S. \(1998\) 'Spinning the wheel of empowerment', Planning, vol 1262, 3 April, pp14-15.](#)