



Lever Five: **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Communities may be groups that are bonded by shared experience. A community may also be a group of people living in the same place or sharing a particular characteristic. Finally, a community may be characterized by people who share a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.

Community engagement honors and validates all these types of communities. As your organization approaches each project, the Pathway Forward framework encourages your organization to use relational approaches and honest commitment of time, treasure, and talent.



Lever Five: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Adoption and broader engagement with renewable energy requires developing mutually beneficial relationships with many different communities to encourage decision making through an equity lens³.

Equity Commitment

We ensure that all communities including energy communities¹, Indigenous communities², and historically marginalized communities benefit from renewable energy projects.

Elements of Community Engagement:

5.1 Community Understanding:

Increases understanding of the historical, social, and cultural context as well as difference in lived experiences before and when engaging with community stakeholders.

5.2 Culturally Informed Approach:

Ensuring the outreach approach is informed by cultural humility, an understanding of history including past harms, and an understanding of the community's cultural expectations.

5.3 Trust Building:

Conducts community outreach in a way that ensures partnership, ongoing presence and follow-through to develop mutually-beneficial, long-term relationships.

5.4 Outreach Strategy:

Cultivating strategic partnerships to co-create programs and initiatives that build relationships while aligning with organizational goals.

What to Measure

- Community Investment in Engagements and Partnership (time, dollars, resources)
- Job Creation
- Community Wealth Building (i.e Supplier Diversity, benefits distribution/ownership)

¹ Energy Community as defined by the Inflation Reduction Act as communities with historical reliance on fossil fuel development.

² Often referred to as frontline and fenceline communities, see this link for more information.

³ Defined as a tool that analyzes how processes, policies, and practices impact people, especially those that have been historically marginalized.

5.1 Community Understanding:

Increases understanding of the historical, social, and cultural context as well as difference in lived experiences before and when engaging with community stakeholders.

The growth stages are a tool to help you assess your organization. Read the descriptions and identify which stage sounds most like your organization. The full self-assessment tool can be found [here](#).

Equity Building Actions

- Prioritize and dedicate resources to researching the local community context and identifying key community stakeholders including centers or individuals of influence.
- Identify internal organizational ambassadors who will participate in community events to build relationships that lead to greater understanding of specific challenges or expectations that communities experience.
- Consider knowledge and insights gained from research and community involvement as business intelligence.

Growth Stages - Assess Your Organization



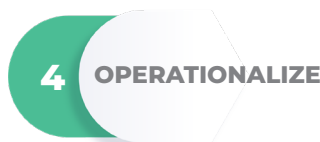
Organizations identify communities to outreach and **explore** best practices for fostering community understanding and identifying community stakeholders to deepen knowledge.



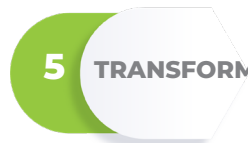
Organizations **develop** strategies for building internal understanding of historical, social, and cultural context.



Organizations **implement** opportunities for leaders, employees, and any other stakeholders to increase understanding of differences in lived experiences when engaging in community stakeholders.



Proactively increasing community understanding is **operationalized** into the organizations learning and development strategy or inclusion competencies, and employee participation in skill building opportunities is measured.



Organizations **consistently** initiate project consideration through community outreach, building community understanding within the workforce resulting in a culturally agile employee base.

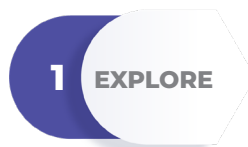
5.2 Culturally Informed Approach:

Ensures the outreach approach is informed by cultural humility, an understanding of history including past harms, and an understanding of the community's cultural expectations.

Equity Building Actions

- Listen and learn from community partners about how they define successful collaborations.
- Engage teams working across many cultural contexts with training opportunities to explore cultural humility and cultural agility.
- Apply cultural understanding to the community engagement approach.

Growth Stages - Assess Your Organization



Organizations identify communities to outreach and **explore** best practices for increasing employees' skills for engaging the community in culturally relevant ways.



Organizations **develop** an outreach plan guided by cultural humility that prepares skill building opportunities for employees to understand community expectations and history.



Organizations **implement** outreach plans, informally and formally checking in with the community to gauge expectations and foster transparency.



Culturally informed approach to community outreach is **operationalized** into the organizations learning and development strategy or inclusion competencies and employee participation in skill building opportunities is measured.



Organization's community outreach is **consistently** informed by cultural humility and community understanding resulting in strategies that center on the needs of the community.

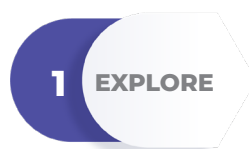
5.3 Trust Building:

Conducts community outreach in a way that ensures partnership, ongoing presence and follow-through to develop mutually-beneficial, long-term relationships.

Equity Building Actions

- Adopt a long-term relational approach to community engagement rather than a short-term transactional approach.
- Identify opportunities to authentically engage with organizations that represent or benefit underrepresented communities.
- Establish and meet commitments identified through mutual co-created agreements between company and community. Deliver on promises dependably.
- Meet with communities regularly to ensure continuity of communication and include community leaders in decision-making processes.

Growth Stages - Assess Your Organization



Organizations identify communities to outreach and **explore** best practices for developing relationships with communities that center on trust and psychological safety.



Organizations **develop** strategies for building long-term relationships with the community and provide opportunities for employees to increase skills in building trust and psychological safety with community partners.



Organizations **implement** relationship development strategies with the community and create formal and informal communication channels to ensure that it is a mutually-beneficial relationship.



Fostering relationships based on trust, psychological safety, and transparency with community partners is **operationalized** into organizations learning and development strategy or inclusion competencies and employee participation in skill building opportunities is measured.



Building mutually-beneficial, sustainable relationships with the community is a **central pillar** of the organization's outreach strategy.

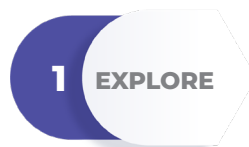
5.4 Outreach Strategy:

Cultivates strategic partnerships to co-create programs and initiatives that build relationships while aligning with organizational goals.

Equity Building Actions

- Identify ways that the organization and community benefit from collaboration such as increasing equity in the supply chain by engaging with diverse suppliers and sourcing materials locally or by developing a recruitment and workforce development partnership.
- Develop strategic partnerships with vetted community organizations where collaboration is mutually beneficial.
- Lift up community partners' leadership, expertise, and agency in collectively driving for positive change.

Growth Stages - Assess Your Organization



Organizations **explore** benchmarks to grow understanding of approaches for mutually beneficial strategic partnerships and collaborative outreach efforts with community stakeholders.



Organizations identify communities to outreach and **develop** a plan to communicate a potential partnership, leaving space and time to co-create with community partners so that programs align with both community needs and organizational goals.



Organizations **implement** partnerships with the community and create formal and informal communication channels to ensure that it is a mutually-beneficial relationship.



Community partnerships are **operationalized** into business strategies and priorities to ensure sustainability and organizations regularly report milestone achievements and impact with community partners.



Outreach strategies **consistently** center on building mutually-beneficial, sustainable partnerships that are co-created with communities to ensure alignment with community needs and organizational goals.



Pathway Forward to Clean Energy for All

A DEI Framework for the Clean Energy Industry

renewablesforward.org