

Who Gets to Represent Community?

As you seek to engage representatives from diverse communities in your collaboration in ways that don't result in tokenism or brownwashing – reflecting on the following questions can help you to identify community members who will authentically represent community.

Reflection Questions

What should you be looking for in community representatives:

- What's their lived experience?
- Who are they talking to on a day-to-day basis? What stories are they hearing?
- What skills have they developed to engage community?
- Who are they connected to? What other perspectives will they be able to bring by reaching out to their connections?
- Do they have relationships with a broad set of people within their community – across class, age, etc?
- Are they open to hearing diverse perspectives within their community?
- Are they grounded in being in community with people?
- Are they skillful listeners?

What should you avoid as you look for community representatives:

- Are they are person who is often tapped to play a community representation role? Are they seen as the “go-to” person?
- Are they a positional leader with a significantly different lived experience than the majority of people who your work is impacting?

What you should reflect on about your readiness to welcome community representatives:

- Are we equipped to welcome these people? What is required of us to be able to receive these members and authentically partner with them?
- Who feels comfortable and safe to us? What are your biases about who feels like a “good fit”?
- Can we bring on 2-3 members of a given community at one time so that we can have multiple perspectives?