

RE:ACTION4INCLUSION'S

INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

A SYNOPSIS OF OUR YOUTH
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE OF

COMMUNITY LIVING ONTARIO

www.reaction4inclusion.com



Introduction

Re:Action4Inclusion's framework for inclusion is a guide that was developed by Community Living Ontario to explain the way our youth engagement initiative works both provincially and locally to build stronger communities that are inclusive of people who have an intellectual disability. The guide outlines several processes that work to engage communities and a provincial network in order to leverage the individual, social and systematic influences that impact youth. In doing so, the framework enables individuals, communities and a provincial network to shift cultures, cultivate youth leadership and inspire actions that will lead to more inclusive opportunities for young people who have an intellectual disability. The following is a breakdown of those processes, outlined in the diagram.

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

**THE FRAMEWORK BEGINS BY
LOOKING AT THE INDIVIDUAL
EXPERIENCES OF A PERSON.**

Step 1: Engage and Identify

First, we look at how a person's individual life experiences form a narrative about their identity, their relationship to others and their personal understanding of their purpose and potential. Youth who have an intellectual disability, identify the limitations placed on them as a result of the negative narratives of disability held by our society. Their peers, who do not have a disability, become informed about the barriers and injustice their peers are experiencing. By raising the consciousness of young people and their allies, they can begin to recognize the impact of these barriers as well as the inequity experienced by people in our society who have been marginalized.



INDIVIDUAL LEVEL



Step 2: Activate and Observe

Second, we invite and often create opportunities for young people to seek out diverse experiences that will push the boundaries of the narratives they know and question the validity of their perceptions. By doing so, they have the opportunity to see an alternative, experience an “Ah-ha” moment that will change the way they see themselves, their relationship to others and what is possible for themselves and others. In almost every case, these small moments of recognition become a self-taught lesson that will change the way they understand the world around them.

Step 3: Mobilize and Equalize

Consequently, having changed the understanding of our relationship to each other and recognizing the larger systems at play, so too does the narrative change for young people, and their actions will begin to reflect the lessons they have learned. By bringing young people together, who have a shared consciousness and value system and who also share a vision for themselves, each other, and their communities, they now have the opportunity to level the playing field for themselves and their peers who have been limited by misconceptions of disability.



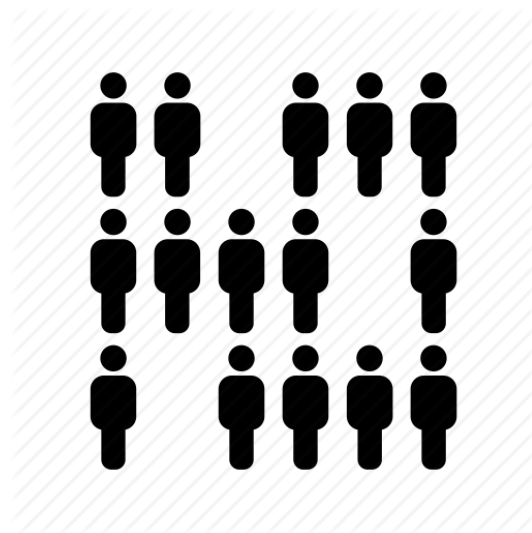
COMMUNITY (SOCIAL) LEVEL

THE THREE INITIAL STAGES ARE ALSO CONDUCTED ON A COMMUNITY (SOCIAL) LEVEL BY WAY OF A GRASSROOTS APPROACH.

To refresh, these three stages are;

1. Engage and Identify
2. Activate and Observe
3. Mobilize and Equalize

Within a community context, we are looking to bring the individual experiences to a larger, more communal context in order to raise awareness and build a consciousness for the experiences of those who have an intellectual disability. In order to build a greater sense of belonging within a community, the community must first recognize and understand the impact of peoples' experiences and how these are impacting the community as a whole. In order to achieve this level of consciousness, we work through the three stages within the context of community conversations, work plans and initiatives.

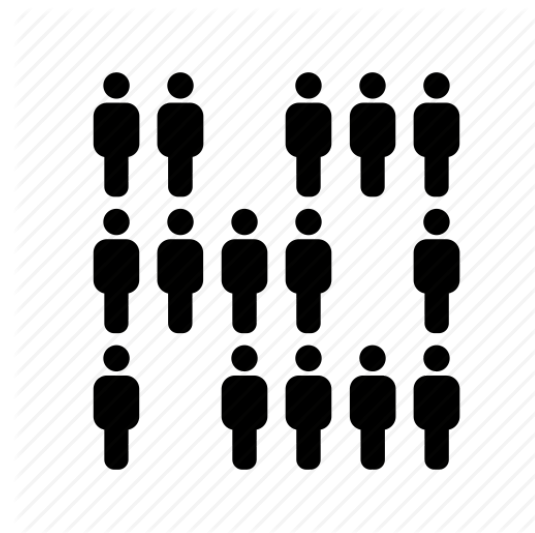




COMMUNITY (SOCIAL) LEVEL

Initially, we seek to identify and engage communities in conversations that highlight the narratives that are being heard, the barriers that are being experienced and provide insight into the larger systems at play that are impacting young people's lives. For many in the community these authentic conversations, where youth can openly share their lived experiences, allows for the community to become more aware of their communities needs and recognize what is impacting young people with and without a disability.

Finally, we look to support communities in their endeavours to expand their vision for their community to be fully inclusive of people who have an intellectual disability. Specifically, we look to support their understanding of the need for authenticity, and the belief that all people are citizens and therefore have valuable contributions to make. By sharing stories and getting creative to break down barriers, we have seen examples of how communities can come together to challenge current practices and become grounded in a culture that provides equitable and equal access for people who have an intellectual disability





Step 1: Learn and Convene

As a provincial organization and initiative, we seek to network and collaborate with stakeholders on a provincial level who recognize the value of youth leadership and who are also invested in building strong communities in Ontario. By working broadly, we have the opportunity to learn from others outside the disability sector, and also to contribute to the conversations of others to tackle specific needs for youth who may or may not have a disability. We also have the opportunity to work broadly to conduct research, hear from families, youth and community members in order to remain informed of the real issues and to share inclusive practices.





Step 2: Model and Reconcile

By learning from and sharing in conversations with others provincially, we are able to develop common agendas and share a vision with others for the province and our young people. By working alongside one another, we have the opportunity to reconcile with others ideas of what authentic inclusion looks like and what youth require from us. From there, we can influence decisions and modify practices that may be harmful or create barriers for young people. Collectively, we can build strategies for greater outreach and rally others who share the collective will to build communities where youth can thrive.



Step 3: Mentor and Advise

Finally, by building a knowledge-base of strong examples of community inclusion across the province, we can invest in supporting activities for young people and their allies to work alongside each other, and to share their own knowledge and lived experiences. We also offer training that builds capacity for allies and youth to think critically about their experiences and learn how to turn their vision into meaningful actions.