

Engagement-Capable Environments

Organizational Self-Assessment Tool



About Healthcare Excellence Canada

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Engagement-capable environments recognize and value the wisdom and lived experience of patients and essential care partners.

By doing so, they create and sustain a culture of patient- and family-centred care¹ and patient partnerships² that seeks to improve the quality, safety, and experience of care and patient outcomes. At an organizational level, engagement-capable environments are built on three main pillars, all interdependent and necessary to create the desired engagement culture. The three pillars are below.



Leaders

provide support and ensure a philosophy of care and strategic focus on the needs and priorities of patients and essential care partners.



Staff/healthcare Teams

are prepared and supported to work collaboratively with patient and essential care partners.



Patient Partners

are empowered to contribute in engagement activities and opportunities are provided to enhance the capacity of a diverse group of patient partners.

¹Patient and family centred care/partnered care is an approach to the planning, delivery, and evaluation of healthcare that is grounded in mutually beneficial partnerships among healthcare providers, patients, and families. Institute for Patient- and Family-Centered Care (2010). Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed on February 22, 2021. <https://www.ipfcc.org/about/pfcc.html>

²Baker GR et al. (2016). Creating 'engagement-capable environments' in healthcare. In Patient Engagement: Catalyzing Improvement and Innovation in Healthcare. Longwoods Publishing.

Creating Engagement-Capable Environments

Background

The development of this **practice-based tool** stems from learning from healthcare leaders, teams and patient partners involved in patient engagement initiatives. We have identified characteristics of healthcare organizations that support **purposeful and meaningful engagement at an organizational level**. This involves bringing together those with lived experience, including patients³ and essential care partners,⁴ with healthcare teams and leaders, to create what we call “engagement-capable environments” to make healthcare improvements.

What have we learned about engagement-capable environments?

- Our focus for engagement-capable environments is at the organizational level – that is, how patients and essential care partners are engaged to support improvements in processes and systems of care that ultimately influence and improve how care is delivered. However, we do recognize that patient engagement happens across multiple levels of the health system (e.g. at the point of care, at the organizational level, in policy-making, research, and elsewhere within health systems).
- Creating engagement-capable environments is a journey that requires a long-term commitment and openness to embed engagement principles into purposeful, sustainable practices. It requires creating a culture that is built through supported actions of leadership, staff and patients together.

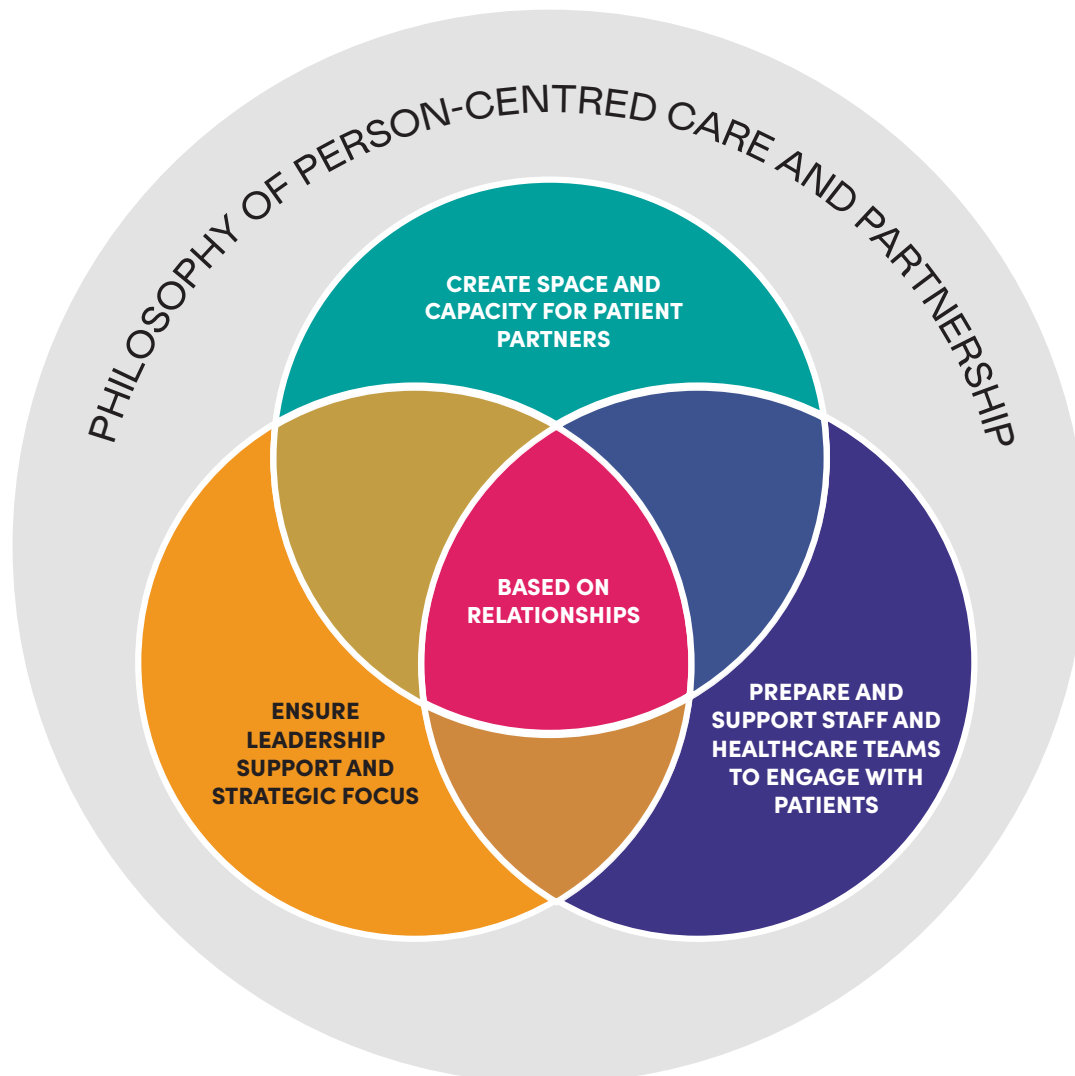
³Patients is used throughout this document to refer to those with lived experience of health and care settings, including clients and people living in long-term care and other congregate care settings.

⁴Essential care partners may include family members, friends, or other caregivers that are identified by the patient.

Why do engagement-capable environments matter?

- Engagement-capable environments support the three pillars of leaders, staff, and patients and build the necessary infrastructure and conditions that ensure impact and sustainability of patient engagement. These engagement experiences are built on relationships and authenticity and avoid tokenism.
- Engagement-capable environments are mutually supportive and co-created by patient partners, staff/healthcare teams and leaders.
- Engagement-capable environments respect the wisdom and experience of patients and essential care partners, and enable active, ongoing, and meaningful collaborations to improve the culture, quality, safety and experience of care and patient outcomes.

Figure 1. Schematic of Engagement-Capable Environments⁵



Purpose of the Tool

The Engagement-capable Environments Organizational Self-Assessment Tool is intended to guide organizational leaders, staff/healthcare teams, and patient partners through a self-reflective exercise. This practice-based tool is intended to stimulate discussions between those involved in engagement activities when considering where they are on their journey towards creating an engagement-capable environment and reflect on key elements to enact purposeful and meaningful engagement.

Using this tool can help you, your team, or your organization determine:

- A collective, broad understanding of current and/or desired engagement capability
- Areas of strength and improvement
- Next steps to consider and timelines.

Using the Tool

The tool may be useful in many health and care settings where leaders, teams, and patient partners aim to work collaboratively. This may include settings such as (but not limited to):

- Healthcare organizations that deliver healthcare services
- Programs/units within healthcare organizations
- Organizations and teams involved in health and care that influence policy, practice, and research.

Remember, creating an engagement-capable environment is a journey, and all organizations/teams are somewhere on the path as they seek to create welcoming and responsive environments that value the lived experiences of those receiving care and essential care partners.

Who should complete this tool?

This tool is meant to guide organizations (or programs/units within organizations) to reflect on their engagement efforts together from multiple perspectives. We recommend this tool be completed by leaders, staff/healthcare teams, and patient partners involved in engagement initiatives. Individuals in these roles include but are not limited to the following:

- **Patient partners:** Those with lived experience of health and care systems (such as patients, clients, people living in long term care, and essential care partners) who share their perspectives of care to contribute to quality and safety initiatives, research, policy, and practices. Essential care partners provide support, as deemed important by the patient. They are identified by the patient (or substitute decision maker) and can include family members, close friends or other caregivers.
- **Staff/healthcare teams:** Individuals who work in the health system, providing or supporting care delivery, or work in areas that support health system change, including policy, research, and practice.
- **Leaders:** Those in leadership positions within health and care organizations, board members, and managers responsible for patient engagement and experience efforts.

How should the tool be used?

At a health system/organizational level: Those involved in engagement activities can come together to assess strengths and areas for growth necessary to create or sustain an engagement-capable environment at the organizational level.

At the level of specific engagement initiatives: Those involved in engagement activities can use this tool to identify enablers or barriers for specific engagement initiatives or interventions. They can reflect on elements of this self-assessment to consider if an engagement-capable environment has been created within their project team.

Instructions

STEP 1

- Read through the tool below to get an overview of the main areas for assessment.
- You can use this PDF and edit directly into the document, or print it out and fill it in manually.

STEP 2

- Leaders, staff/healthcare teams, and patient partners will independently complete all three sections of this tool to determine, from their perspectives, the organizational strengths, areas for improvement and next steps.
- If you cannot assess an attribute, are unsure, have not observed this element, or feel this is something you cannot assess, please select “unknown.”

STEP 3

- Although this assessment can be used in different ways, ideally it was designed to support a facilitated discussion, where individuals can come together after completing the assessment to review each section including where assessments were in agreement, and where they differed. This discussion is valuable to provide varying perspectives of those involved in engagement activities.
- Recognize the power differentials in the room and create safety for all perspectives to be heard. A dedicated staff member or facilitator may wish to meet with the patient partner(s) in advance to go through their feedback in a safe and comfortable way.
- Groups can consider submitting their individual responses to an assigned team member who will act as a facilitator in advance to review the responses and then facilitate the discussion.
- Come to a consensus on a master copy of the tool that reflects a collective, broad understanding of areas where there are strong engagement practices, and where improvements can be made.
- At the end of the tool, there is a table that can be used by the facilitator to summarize the collective thoughts as well as curated resources to support engagement practices.
- We recommend repeating this exercise at regular intervals across the organization to identify and track changes in capacity/capability (e.g., minimum once per year).

Engagement-Capable Environment Pillar:

PATIENT PARTNERS⁵

This pillar focuses on elements that create the conditions by which patient partners are empowered to contribute in meaningful ways, and have opportunities to enhance their existing skills and capacities.

For organizational/engagement leaders, staff, and patient partners: Reflect on your recent engagement experiences. Put a check mark in the column that best describes your perceptions of the presence of key elements below that support meaning engagement practices.	Yes	No	Somewhat	Unknown
Patient partners have a clear understanding of their role and the purpose of the engagement initiative, including expectations.				
Patient partners and staff/healthcare teams develop a shared goal and purpose for engagement.				
Patient partners are prepared to participate in engagement activities and provided with orientation and appropriate materials, with opportunity to ask questions/seek clarity in advance, so they can contribute to their full potential.				
Patient partners have a dedicated staff member or peer mentor for support who they can contact with questions or concerns, before, during and after engagement activities.				
Patient partners are offered a variety of options (e.g. times, format, in person/virtual, accessibility considerations) to meet their needs and enable them to fully participate in engagement activities.				
Patient partners have different opportunities to be engaged based on their skills, interests, and experiences.				
Patient partners have opportunities to build and enhance their skill set, knowledge, and capability through accessible learning opportunities sponsored by the organization.				
Patient partners have the opportunity to provide feedback on their engagement experience to inform improvements for meaningful engagement.				
Patient partners are aware of what outcomes and decisions have occurred as a result of their contributions and engagement.				
Patient partners are recognized and valued for their contributions to the engagement initiative which may include forms of compensation.				

⁵Patient Partners: Those with lived experience of health and care systems (such as patients, clients, people living in long term care, and essential care partners) who share their perspectives of care to contribute to quality and safety initiatives, research, policy, and practices.

PATIENT PARTNERS⁶

Comments

What is working well? Strengths to build on:

What is not working well? Areas for improvement:

Identified priorities: recommendations and next steps (including timelines)

⁶Patient Partners: Those with lived experience of health and care systems (such as patients, clients, people living in long term care, and essential care partners) who share their perspectives of care to contribute to quality and safety initiatives, research, policy, and practices.

Engagement-Capable Environment Pillar:

STAFF/HEALTHCARE TEAMS

This pillar focuses on how staff and healthcare teams are prepared and supported to engage with patients and have an understanding of organizational processes and principles of engagement and partnership built on trusting relationships.

For organizational/engagement leaders, staff, and patient partners: Reflect on your recent engagement experiences. Put a check mark in the column that best describes your perceptions of the presence of key elements below that support meaning engagement practices.	Yes	No	Somewhat	Unknown
Staff/healthcare teams understand the fundamentals of patient- and family-centred care and partnership in care that forms the basis of their patient engagement activities.				
Staff/healthcare teams have the resources they need to support engagement activities.				
Staff/healthcare teams use engagement approaches that are suited to the engagement purpose				
Staff/healthcare teams can articulate the purpose of why they engage with patient partners on initiatives.				
Staff/healthcare teams are familiar with organizational frameworks and processes for engagement, including how patient partners are recognized for their time and contributions, and reimbursement of expenses.				
Staff/healthcare teams aim to reduce barriers to patient participation by using equitable and inclusive engagement approaches to gather a broad range of perspectives.				
Staff/healthcare teams are conscious of power imbalances inherent on teams where people have many different roles. Staff seek to create an open, safe, and welcoming environment to minimize these imbalances.				
Staff/healthcare teams receive training/education to engage with empathy, compassion, and openness to learning. This may include active listening skills, understanding trauma, cultural safety and diversity training.				
Staff/healthcare teams take the time to build relationships with patient partners involved in an engagement activity, to develop trust and an openness to working and learning together as well as expectations for each particular engagement.				

For organizational/engagement leaders, staff, and patient partners: Reflect on your recent engagement experiences. Put a check mark in the column that best describes your perceptions of the presence of key elements below that support meaning engagement practices.	Yes	No	Somewhat	Unknown
Staff/healthcare teams and patient partners seek ways to improve processes of engagement and how they work together.				
Staff/healthcare teams take responsibility to provide timely follow up and updates to patient partners regarding the outcomes of their engagement initiative.				

Comments

What is working well? Strengths to build on:

What is not working well? Areas for improvement:

Identified priorities: recommendations and next steps (including timelines)

Engagement-Capable Environment Pillar:

LEADERSHIP

This pillar focuses on how organizational/engagement leaders provide clear direction for patient engagement efforts that are aligned with strategy and are able to role model engagement efforts that set expectations for the organization.

For organizational/engagement leaders, staff, and patient partners: Reflect on your recent engagement experiences. Put a check mark in the column that best describes your perceptions of the presence of key elements below that support meaning engagement practices.	Yes	No	Somewhat	Unknown
Leaders have clearly expressed a philosophy of patient- and family-centred care and partnership that is foundational to the organization.				
Leaders acknowledge and demonstrate value for lived patient experience as an essential source of knowledge that guides improvements in quality, safety, and experience of care.				
Leaders use many different approaches to engagement to gain an understanding of diverse patient experiences.				
Leaders have created a culture of accountability by establishing organization-wide expectations for engagement.				
Leaders have made an organizational commitment to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion in engagement initiatives.				
Leaders ensure there are opportunities for patient partners in leadership/ decision-making roles (e.g. chair/co-chair of organizational committees, on hiring panels, in governance).				
Leaders have endorsed an organizational framework for how patient partners are recognized for their time and contributions, including reimbursement of expenses. Recognition may include forms of compensation for their time and expertise.				
Leaders have put in place the structures to monitor, evaluate and improve patient engagement processes and their impact on outcomes.				
Leaders role model behaviours necessary for authentic engagement, including active listening, openness, transparency and humility.				
Leaders develop and support structures and roles that will provide resources for staff/healthcare teams to meaningfully engage with patients and essential care partners.				

LEADERSHIP

Comments

What is working well? Strengths to build on:

What is not working well? Areas for improvement:

Identified priorities: recommendations and next steps (including timelines)

Summary Table

Engagement-Capable Environment Pillar	What is Working Well? Strengths to Build On	What is not working Well? Areas for Improvement	Identified Priorities: Recommendations and Next Steps (including timelines)
<div data-bbox="147 604 401 705" style="background-color: #009688; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Patient Partners</div>			
<div data-bbox="147 1096 401 1197" style="background-color: #4a4a8a; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Staff/Healthcare Teams</div>			
<div data-bbox="147 1596 401 1696" style="background-color: #e69138; color: white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Leadership</div>			

Curated Resources

Many patient engagement resources exist and here are some that you can start with.

Resources to support Patient Partners in engagement activities

- [Get Involved in Quality Improvement: A Guide for Patient and Caregiver Advisors](#)
- [A Glossary of Health Care Terms: For Patient and Caregiver Partners](#)
- [Patient Partner Preparation](#)
- [Tips for How to be an Effective Patient or Family Advisor: A Beginning List](#)
- [Sharing Your Story: Tips for Patients and Families](#)
- [Jargon Buster- A Guide to Help Understand Common Health Research Terms](#)
- [The Power of Conversations](#)
- [Family Presence Conversations: Tips for Patient, Family, Advisor and Citizen Conversations with Healthcare Partners](#)
- [Patient and Family Partner Handbook](#)
- [A Guide to Patient Engagement](#)

Resources to support Staff/ Healthcare teams in engagement activities

- [How to Create Safe Spaces for Patients: Virtual Version](#)
- [A Resource Toolkit for Engaging Patient and Families at the Planning Table](#)
- [Choosing Methods for Patient and Caregiver Engagement: A Guide for Health Care Organizations](#)
- [Health Service Co-Design Guide](#)
- [Guide to Patient and Family Engagement in Hospital Quality and Safety](#)
- [10 Insights From Healthcare Providers and Leaders](#)
- [Diversity Learning Exchange Framework Worksheet](#)
- [Equity in Engagement Framework](#)
- [Demystifying Authentic Patient Engagement: Practical Tips for Success](#)
- [Engagement Guiding Principles](#)
- [10 Lessons Learned from Patient and Family Advisors](#)
- [Choosing Methods for Patient and Caregiver Engagement](#)
- [Take Your Patient Partnering to the Next Level](#)
- [A Guide to Patient Engagement](#)
- [Top Ten Tips for Closing the Loop](#)
- [Opportunity Preparation Checklist](#)
- [Healthcare Partner Readiness Checklist](#)
- [Priority Health Innovation Challenge Webinar: November 25, 2019](#)

Resources to support Leaders in engagement activities

- [Culturally Safe Engagement: What Matters to Indigenous \(First Nations, Métis & Inuit\) Patient Partners](#)
- [Partnering with Patients, Families & Caregivers in Co-designing Care](#)
- [Creating “Engagement-Capable Environments” in Healthcare](#)
- [Patient and Public Engagement Evaluation Toolkit](#)
- [Engaging Patients in Patient Safety – a Canadian Guide](#)
- [Patient Engagement Heard and Valued Handbook](#)
- [Patient Partner Compensation in Research and Health Care: The Patient Perspective on Why and How](#)
- [Should Money Come into It? A Tool for Deciding Whether to Pay Patient-Engagement Participants](#)
- [Recruiting for Diversity](#)
- [Patient Engagement and its Evaluation Tools – Current Challenges and Future Directions](#)
- [Overview: Achieve EDI-Informed Results](#)
- [Engage Others](#)
- [Tools to support the creation of policies that recognize and support essential care partners](#)

Please see the [Patient Engagement Resource Hub](#) for more.

Healthcare Excellence Canada works with partners to spread innovation, build capability, and catalyze policy change so that everyone in Canada has safe and high-quality healthcare. Through collaboration with patients, caregivers and people working in healthcare, we turn proven innovations into lasting improvements in all dimensions of healthcare excellence. Launched in 2021, HEC brings together the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement. HEC is an independent, not-for-profit charity funded primarily by Health Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.