



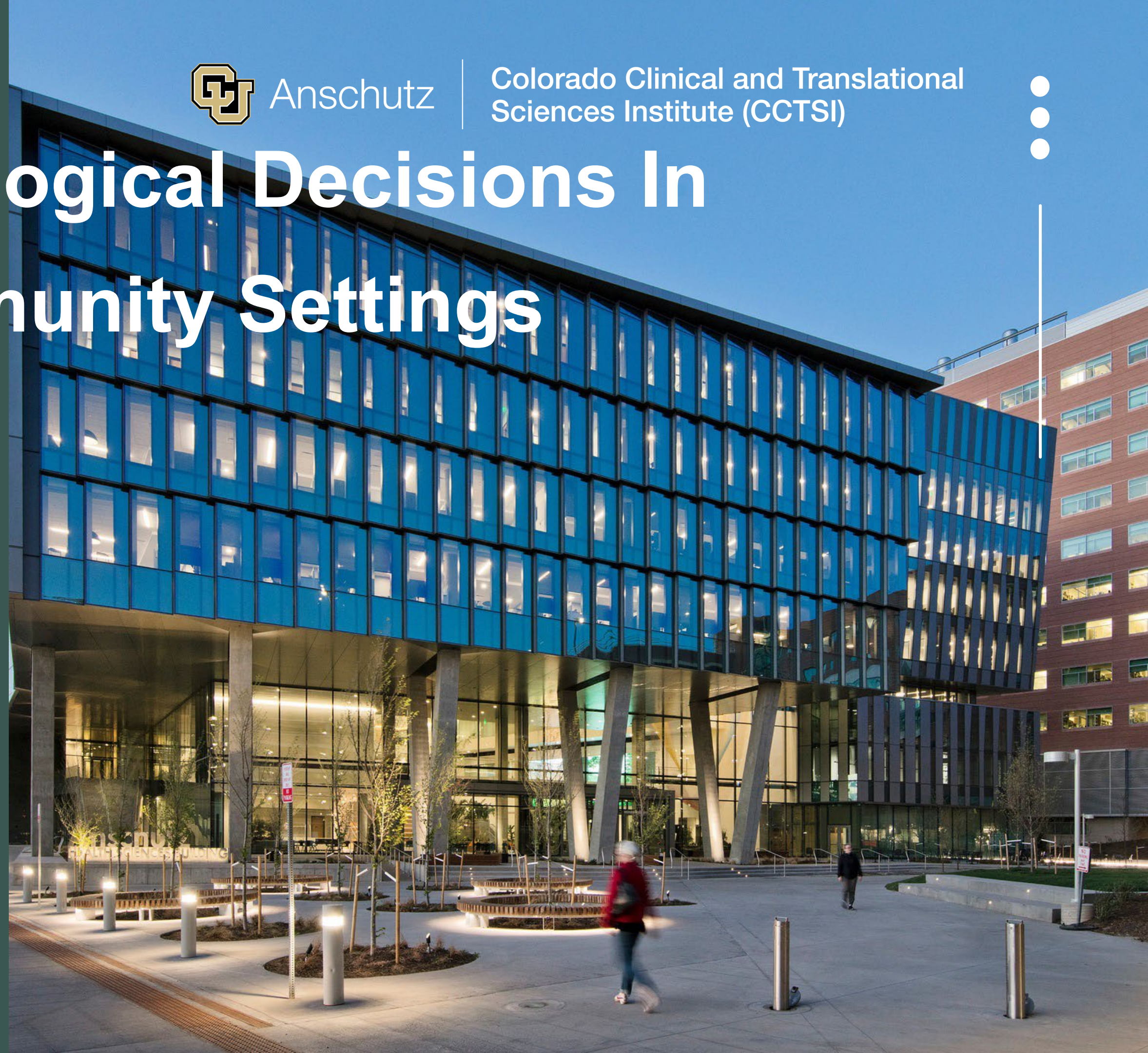
Anschutz

Colorado Clinical and Translational
Sciences Institute (CCTSI)

Making Methodological Decisions In Real-world Community Settings

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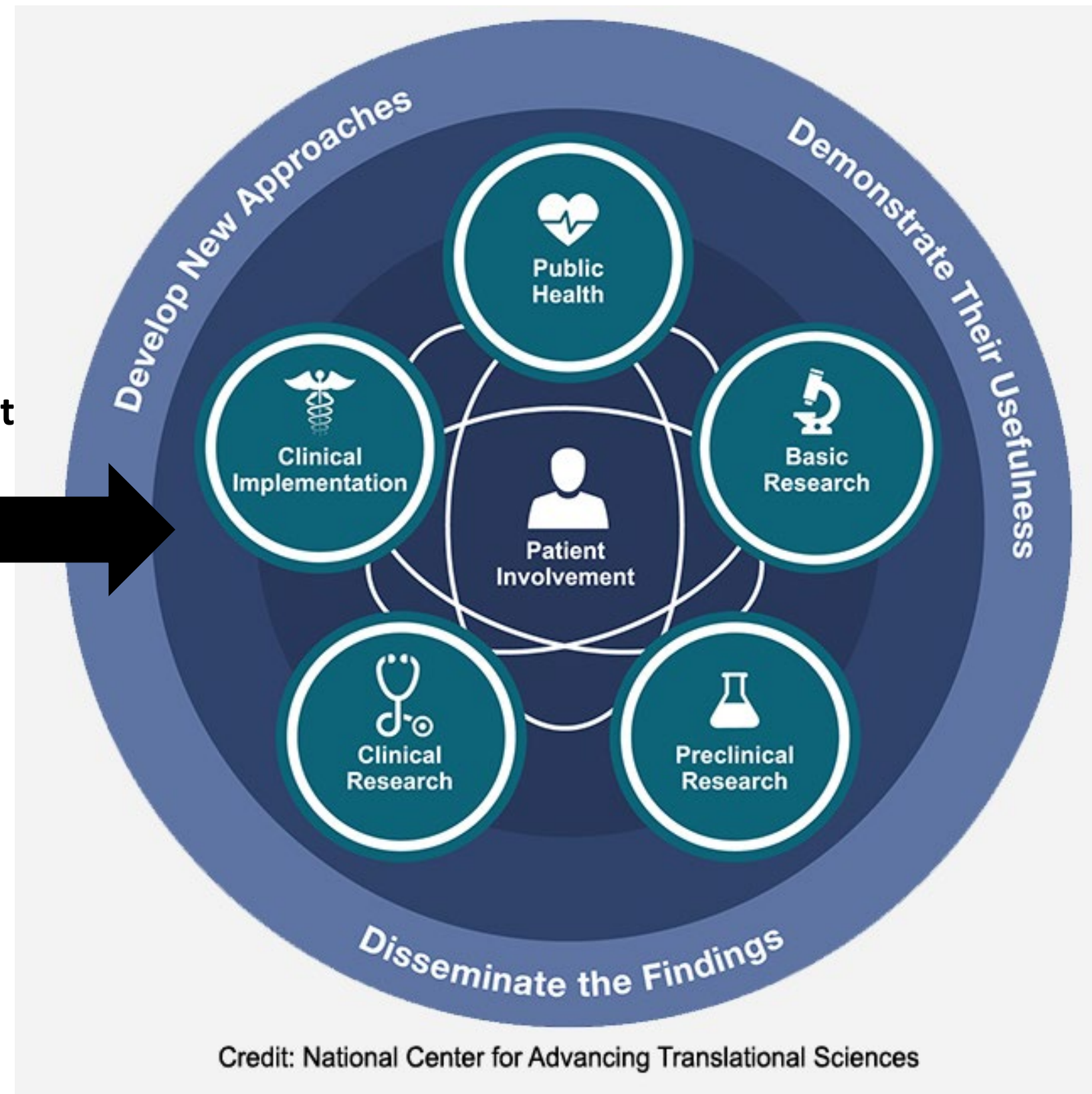
Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants should be able to:

- Compare and contrast what makes an engagement method a good “fit” for specific community and research contexts
- Describe resources available to help choose engagement methods



Engagement Across The Translational Science Spectrum



We often think of engagement on this side, where CEnR can help support:

- Study design
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Dissemination
- Etc.

But for more than a decade, NIH and others have encouraged CEnR even at these earlier, upstream research stages.

What engagement method works best at different stages of translational science?

A Take Home Point



I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.
- *Abraham Maslow (1962)*

In Community Engaged Research (CEnR), we should continually seek to expand our repertoire of engagement methods.



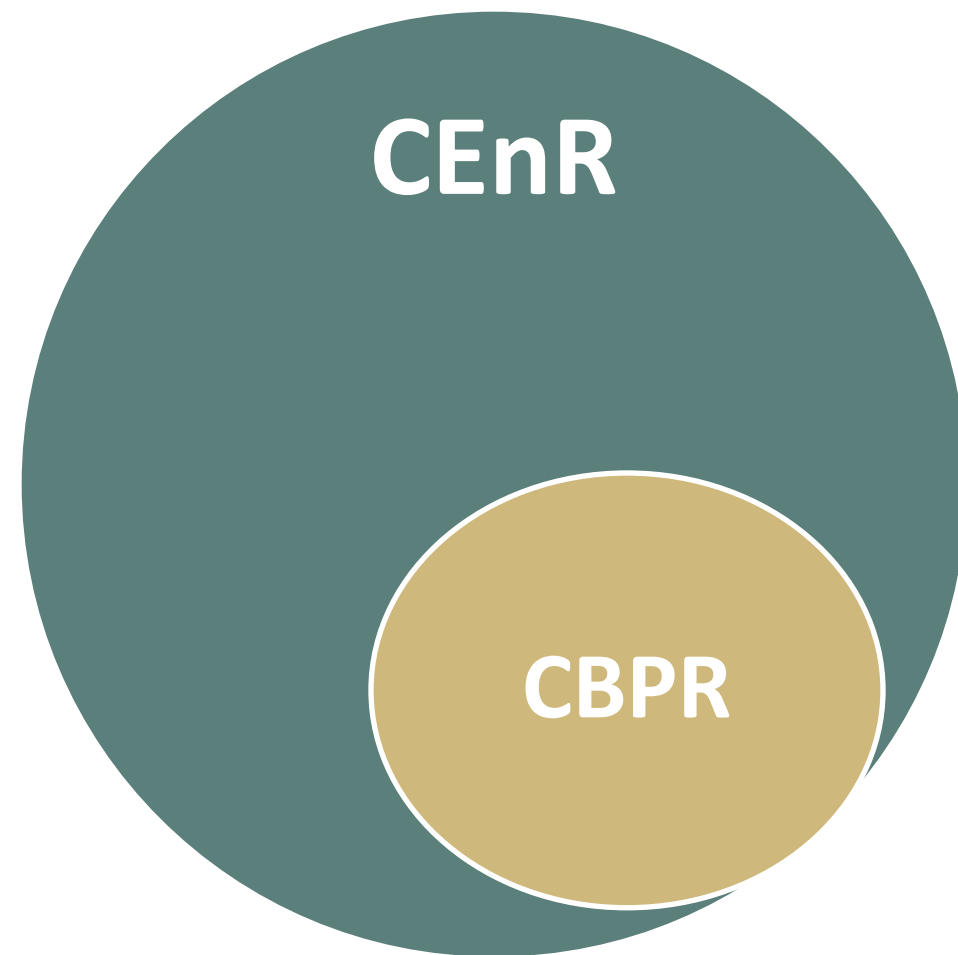
What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement builds sustainable relationships through trust and collaboration, strengthening community well-being. The process should be enduring, equitable, and culturally sensitive to all participants, with a shared goal of addressing the concerns of the community.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Principles of Community Engagement 3rd edition.
2025. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/251390>



Community Engaged Research (CEnR) and Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR)



“All CBPR is CEnR, but not all CEnR is CBPR.”

Although sometimes considered the “gold standard,” CBPR is a specific approach to engagement – one that is deep, continuous, and truly driven by community.

CEnR is a spectrum, engaging communities at various stages of the research process, while still doing so meaningfully and authentically.

Shared Principles?

Principles of CBPR
Communities as the unit, not just individuals
Build on existing community strengths
Facilitating collaborative, empowering partnerships to address disparities
Commitment to co-learning
Balancing research aims to ensure mutual benefit
Focusing on issues of community concern
A cyclical, iterative process
Delivering results to all
Sustainable, long-term partnerships

Principles of CEnR (CDC)
Be clear about the purposes or goals
Communities and individuals have the right to make decisions
Mobilize community strengths
Foster collaboration and long term partnership
Establish partnership for long-term change
Become knowledgeable about the community
Build and maintain relationships and trust
Give control to community as needs change
Demonstrate trustworthiness
Respect diversity within community

- Notice a number of similarities:**
- Building on community strengths
 - Relationships and trust are key
 - Emphasis on sharing control

Is this a matter of degree, not kind?

Should we all do CBPR?

Although CBPR is an ideal, there are various reasons why CBPR is not always the best fit for research, including...

- Research that is on a short timeline, with limited engagement budget or lack of flexibility for local adaptation
- Research where the question has already been determined (e.g., by a funder)
- Lack of willingness to share power and control with the community

Still, CEnR – when done authentically – can greatly improve research design, conduct, and dissemination.



Approaches, Methods and Tools, Oh My!

Approach	An organizing framework that sets the high level approach to engagement. Examples might include: • Community based participatory research (CBPR) • Participatory action research
Method	A set of tools and techniques, often formalized or protocolized, that together help achieve the purposes of engagement. Examples include: • Stakeholder advisory panels • Bootcamp Translation • Community Engagement Studios
Tool	A means for information gathering, creation or sharing that is used as part of a method (not themselves engagement). Examples include: • Surveys • Interviews • Focus groups

Fuzzy but important

Are some engagement methods better for some research stages over others?



Stakeholder Advisory Panels



A standard approach is to create a Stakeholder Advisory Panel to advise on your research. Yes, but...



Imagine the Following Case Study

Dr. Elena Ramirez, a public health researcher, is launching a new initiative focused on improving chronic disease outcomes in a rural region. While existing literature highlights common risk factors, Dr. Ramirez recognizes that national data may not reflect the experiences and most pressing concerns of the local community. To ensure her research is relevant and impactful, she wants to engage the community. But how should she engage?

Stakeholder Advisory Panel (SAP)

Dr. Ramirez could reach out to her existing SAP from a prior hypertension study, whose membership includes several community organization leaders.

Community Engagement (CE) Studios

CE studios could bring together community experts, moderated by a neutral facilitator, to come to consensus about priorities.

Deliberative Polling & Town Hall Event

A community wide survey followed by one or more in person community meetings could solicit priorities from the broader community.

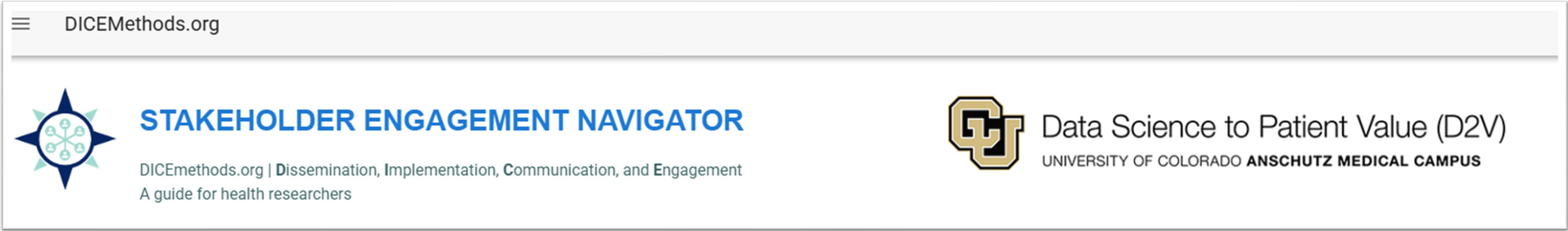


Weighing the Different Methods

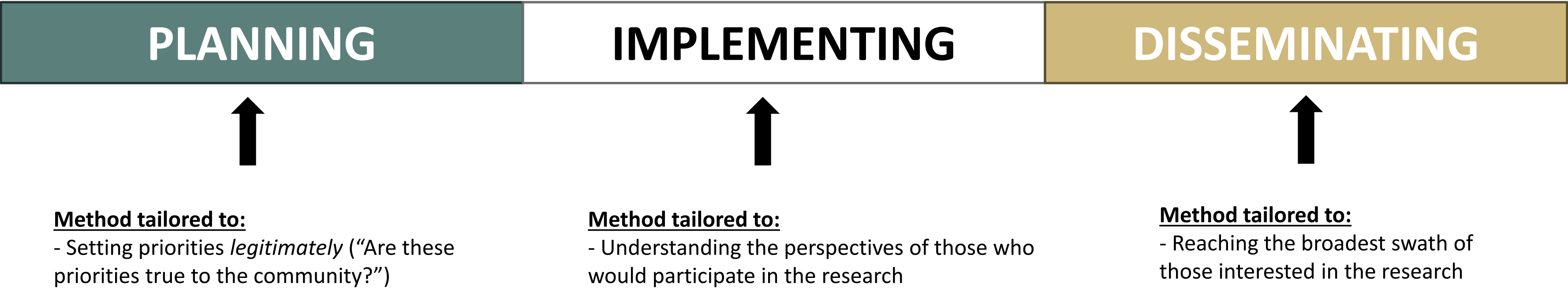
Although not comprehensive, the Table below shows how the engagement methods can differ.

	RELATIVE ADVANTAGES	RELATIVE DISADVANTAGES
Stakeholder Advisory Panel	• Known to Dr. Ramirez • Appears to have influential	• Composition may overly influence priorities
Community Engagement Studio	• Highly structured technique • Community is the expert	• Brief (even one time) – may be more “first impressions” or consultative than longitudinal engagement
Deliberative polling & Town Hall Meetings	• Wider segment of the community voice	• Given surveys and community meetings, may be more expensive • Assumes majority voice

Different Engagement Methods Suit Different Purposes



In DICEMethods.org, we considered “fit” of method to purpose along the lines of:





STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT NAVIGATOR

DICEmethods.org | Dissemination, Implementation, Communication, and Engagement
A guide for health researchers



Data Science to Patient Value (D2V)
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

RE-LAUNCH
TOOL

[Home](#) > [Stakeholder Engagement Selection Tool](#) > [Research Stage Selection](#) > [Engagement Purpose Selection](#) > [Refinements and Results Page](#)

Your chosen research stage(s): **Disseminating**

Your chosen purpose(s) of engagement: **Disseminate findings to relevant audiences**

Use the sliders to further refine your search. You may use the sliders to set a range or to select one point.

\$ Budget

↓

\$ \$\$\$ \$\$\$\$\$

🕒 Time per interaction

↓

An hour or less Half a day A full day

👤 Number of interactions

↓

1-2 times Appx. 5 times 10+

After adjusting sliders, click on highlighted strategies below to discover more.

- BOOTCAMP TRANSLATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STUDIO

CONCEPT MAPPING

DISCOVERY AND ACTION DIALOGUES
- HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

I-CORPS

NOMINAL GROUP TECHNIQUE

ONLINE COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS

ONLINE COMMUNITIES
- STAKEHOLDER PANEL/ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TOWN HALL MEETING

The DICE Methods Tool provides educational resources and a selector tool that can be used to help you fit engagement methods to your needs.



**Are some engagement methods a better fit for
specific community contexts?**



Community Fit



“I’m really good at method X. So I can use it no matter which community I engage with.”



Introducing the CHEER study

Diabetes digital
health literacy

Disability services
navigation for Latino
families

OpenNotes and
health information
transparency for
older adults

Women's mental
health in refugee
communities

Dementia caregiving
in disproportionately
affected
communities

Primary care access
for all genders

The CHEER Study is working with 6 community-academic partnerships to:

- Characterize the core features of engagement methods
- Assess the fit of engagement methods for planning patient centered research within specific communities
- Conduct a comparative effectiveness study to see which methods work best, when.

CHEER Team Focus Groups

We asked each team to rank, from 1-12 (most → least preferred), 12 methods (adapted from DICEMethods.org), then held a 90 minute focus group with each team to learn why they preferred certain methods over others for planning research.

Table 1. Average Rank for each Method Across Six CHEER Teams

Method	Average Rank, M (SD)
Appreciative Inquiry	1.83 (1.17)
Community Engagement Studios	1.83 (0.75)
Stakeholder Panel Advisory Group	3.33 (1.37)
Design Thinking	5 (2.19)
Concept Mapping	6.17 (2.48)
Customer Discovery	8 (1.79)
Experience Based Co Design	6.33 (2.5)
Bootcamp Translation	7.17 (3.31)
Delphi Technique	8.83 (2.56)
Online Communities	8.5 (1.52)
Deliberative Polling	9 (1.41)
Citizen Juries	12 (0)

NOTE: Calculated from post-focus group rankings which were used to determine method assignments; Methods are organized in ascending order by mean ranking

Lesson 1: Shared Perspectives

Across all the community focus groups, three themes came up in relation to preferred engagement methods:

- (1) A desire for methods that promote trust between community and researchers
- (2) Ensuring that methods address community-specific needs
- (3) Using methods that result in tangible benefits to the community (outcomes)

Lesson 2: Words Matter

Several community groups reacted to the words used in describing methods.

CITIZEN JURIES

One focus group very clearly disliked Citizen Juries because of its legal connotation *and* the sense of “adversarial” methodology.

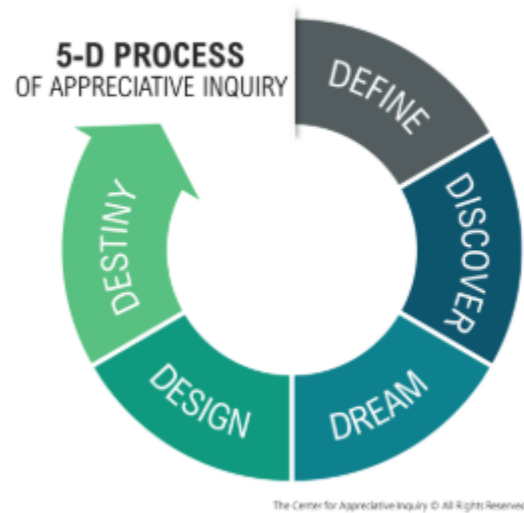
Boot Camp Translation

People responded differently to “Boot Camp” – some perceiving a military connotation, others reminding them of their exercise glasses and a “get to work” approach.

Lesson 3: Strength Based Approaches Preferred

Several of our communities described themselves as being often treated as having “deficits” (e.g., “disability,” “cognitive impairment,” etc.). For these communities, they specifically looked for methods that emphasized strengths.

5-D PROCESS OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:



Appreciative Inquiry engagements are designed and delivered using the 5-D process consisting of: Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Unlike other change models that have a distinct beginning and end points, AI's process is cyclical and invites ongoing exploration into new opportunities for learning, growth, and innovation.

DEFINE. Choose the affirmative topic or focus for the inquiry.

DISCOVER. Inquire into positive moments and share stories.

DREAM. Create inspiring images of a desired future.

DESIGN. Innovate ways to create the ideal future.

DESTINY. Live your design & make changes as needed.

Appreciative Inquiry is one engagement method that uniquely focuses on community strengths, rather than weakness.

Ensuring Goodness of Fit

When selecting engagement methods, it is critical to choose methods sensitive to the unique context of the community with which you are engaging.



The Future of Engagement Methods

One focus group participant implored us to find or design new methods – in community, by community – for future CEnR.

[Right now]...it's like taking an engagement method created on Mars and using it on Earth.

-Focus Group participant

How should I decide “whom” to engage in CEnR?



Whom should you invite to engage?



A standard approach is to invite people who “look like” those affected by or interested in research. But is it so simple?



Beyond “Descriptive Representation”

In a study of patient and family advisory councils (PFACs), we held 5 focus groups (n=42 people) to learn what *patients, caregivers, and families* thought about “who” should be engaged on a council. What we heard expanded our view of the “who” question.

POLITICAL THEORY	Description	COLLOQUIAL
Descriptive	Demographic similarity	“Looks like me”
Formal	Authorized (e.g., elected)	“Chosen by me”
Symbolic	Accepted by those represented	“Endorsed by me”
Substantive	Represents my interests	“Advances my goals”

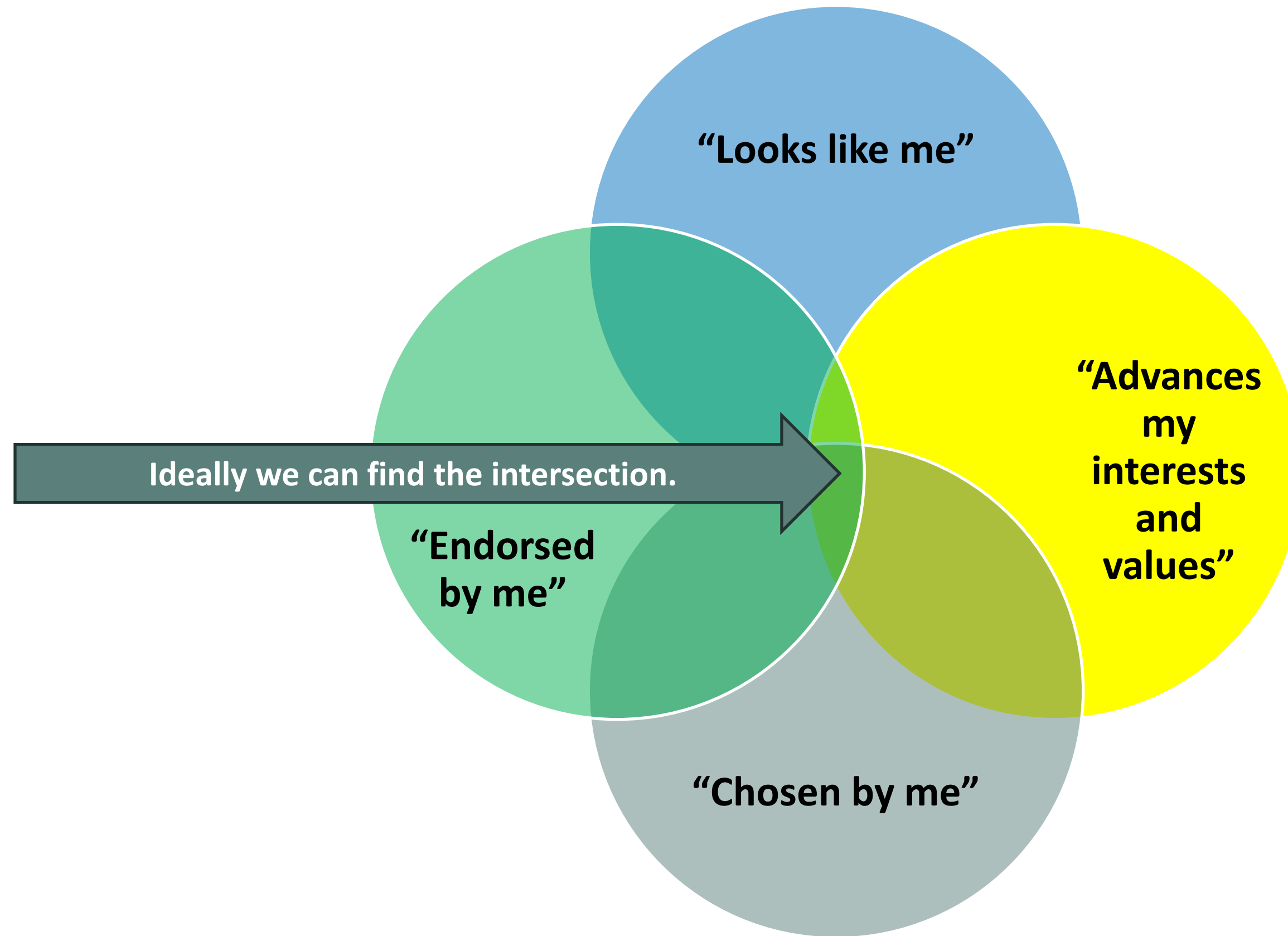
Why “Who” Matters

So I think there's an interaction between who sits on the board and what kind of issues the board deals with, I think there's an interaction between the two and one affects the other.

(female, age 74)

In our study, the broader community represented by the advisory council cared about *who* in part because they cared about *what*...i.e., what would be done as a result of the council's work.







Conclusions

- **There is no “one size fits all” to engagement methods in CEnR.** Choosing an engagement method for CEnR requires just as much thought as choosing other research methods.
- **Fortunately, the Science of Engagement is progressing, and we now have resources to help us decide.** DICEMethods.org is one, but soon, there will be numerous others.

