STEP 7: DOCUMENT KEY POINTS OF STAKEHOLDER DISCUSSION & INVITE BROAD COMMUNITY INPUT

Broad community input is essential to the health assessment process. It can validate the draft needs assessment, strengthen community support or buy-in, and lead to identification of issues unique to special population groups. Community meetings, presentations to organizations, and press releases are standard approaches for engaging the community along with website postings and use of social media. An example of how one community validated its needs assessment process follows:

> St. L hosted a community forum to validate priorities. It identified 12 health problems in the community, based on CDC and county health ranking data. Each problem was listed on a poster board. Forum participants, representing a broad spectrum of the community and health and social service providers were given "sticky notes" on which they wrote their names and contact information.
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> After a brief presentation about each of the identified problems, there was a general discussion, which resulted in adding two more problems that were also posted. Participants were asked to vote with their sticky notes for community problems they believed were most important.
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> It soon became clear which problems were priorities for the forum attendees. The hospital also had a list of people and organizations interested in working on priority issues through the contact information on their sticky notes.
>
> --Catholic Health Association of the United States
> *Assessing and Addressing Community Health Needs*
> Discussion Draft: Revised February 2012, p. 71

Conflicting views on what issues are critical to a community's health can be expected to emerge. Although difficult, this situation demonstrates that participants are sufficiently concerned about their community's health to raise questions. Suggestions for managing the conflicts are excerpted from *Assessing and Addressing Community Health Needs* (p. 70) and include:

- Addressing the community's concern first, building trust and buy-in from community members.
- Embarking on an educational campaign to raise awareness of the priority needs.
- Addressing both needs, the problem clearly identified by public health data and the problem identified by community members.
- A skilled facilitator to help participants come to a common understanding and recognize that there may be different priorities, but that all are valid and require different strategies.