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## PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ENGAGEMENT

**Participatory practice** refers to ways of working that actively involve the people most affected by an issue in shaping decisions, processes, and outcomes. Rather than viewing communities or beneficiaries solely as sources of data or recipients of services, participatory approaches recognise them as knowledge holders, partners, and co-creators. This means engaging people meaningfully at different stages of the work - such as identifying priorities, designing activities, interpreting findings, and reflecting on what change looks like - based on their lived experiences and contexts.

In practice, this requires relationships built on respect, trust, and transparency. Applicants are expected to interact constructively with ultimate beneficiaries by creating spaces for dialogue, listening to diverse perspectives (especially those often excluded), and being responsive to feedback. Participatory practice is not a one-time consultation, but an ongoing process that acknowledges power imbalances and seeks to share decision-making wherever possible. We encourage approaches that are context-sensitive, inclusive, and ethically grounded, and that value local knowledge as central to achieving meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

In strong proposals, participatory practice is often reflected in how problems are defined. Applicants show that project priorities come from community-identified needs rather than external assumptions, for example by referencing prior consultations, local partnerships, or community-led assessments. Proposals may describe how different groups were intentionally included in shaping the project concept.

It is also reflected in project design and implementation. This can include plans for co-design workshops, community advisory groups, peer leaders, or local facilitators who play an active role in delivery. Strong proposals explain how beneficiaries will influence decisions over time - such as adjusting activities based on feedback, sharing leadership roles, or enabling communities to manage parts of the project themselves.

Another common marker is participatory monitoring, learning, and accountability. Applicants may propose regular feedback loops, community scorecards, participatory evaluation methods, or open forums where beneficiaries can raise concerns and suggest improvements. The most compelling proposals clearly show how this feedback will lead to real changes in project direction, budgets, or priorities.

Finally, participatory practice often appears in power-sharing and capacity-building commitments. This includes fair compensation for community contributors, support for local leadership, transparent communication about constraints and trade-offs, and plans to strengthen long-term community ownership beyond the grant period.

Overall, strong proposals move beyond describing participation as a principle and instead demonstrate who participates, when, how their voices shape decisions, and what power they actually hold.