

# Recruitment

Who a table identifies as potential family leaders and how they are recruited can make all the difference in a family engagement and leadership effort. Doing some pre-planning at every stage of the identification and recruitment process can help to ensure effective and positive outcomes for the family leaders and the table.

## Questions to think about prior to recruiting

As your organization prepares to invite family leaders to the table, it's helpful to consider a few questions:

- What are you hoping to gain from having family leaders at the table? What are you hoping they'll gain?
- Why is it important to have family leaders' voices in this process?
- How will their input be reflected in the final decision-making? How is decision-making set up to provide opportunities for meaningful family leader impact?
- What support can you provide to those who participate? These may include coordinating meeting times around their schedules, stipends, transportation, child care, translation, staff support, technology support, and more.



Having answers to these questions will help determine what kind of input is needed and who are the right people to provide it. It will also help clarify what an organization is able to offer a family leader in terms of experience, empowerment, and support. Organizations will need to know both in order to identify which family leaders to approach and how to go about doing it.

## Who to recruit?

The nature of any family engagement and leadership effort is going to be shaped by the family leaders the organization identifies and recruits.

It can be tempting to recruit family leaders who are already known to the organization because they have some professional relationship to the issues being covered or work in the early childhood sphere.



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While it's great to have those voices, it's important to dig deeper and engage family leaders who are participating in or have recently participated in the programs being discussed. The goal is to have a range of experiences reflected and to represent the diversity of the community in terms of race/ethnicity, income, geography, language, family structure, and other relevant factors.

The definition of family leader should be drawn widely enough to encompass the diversity of relationships that exist in families. The individuals engaged may be parents, step-parents, grandparents, kinship care providers, foster parents, or anyone in a parenting role. Having a variety of perspectives can be beneficial because individuals may experience a program differently depending on their various vantage points.

In all circumstances, the aim should be to include those closest to and most directly affected by the decisions the group will be making. This might mean focusing first on family leaders who are currently in the programs being discussed. Recent alumni of the program would also be good candidates.

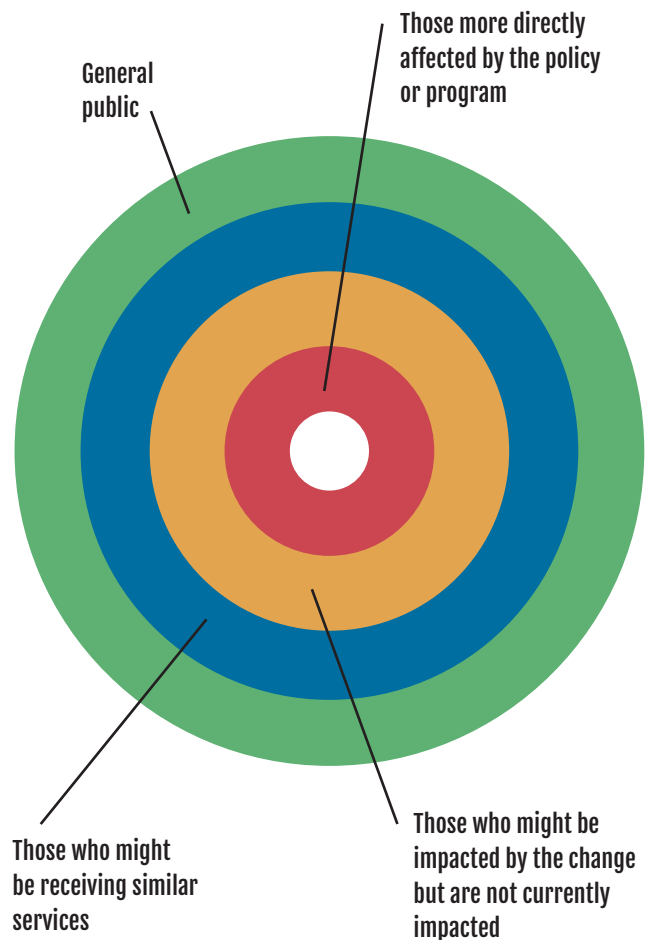
## Where to recruit?

Prior to beginning recruitment, make a list of what topics are likely to be covered and who focuses on those issues or provides those programs.

Imagine a circle with a pin at its center surrounded by concentric rings. The issues or programs on which the group focuses will serve as the center of your outreach strategy. Those working directly on the issues or providing the programs will make up the first tier of potential partners in recruitment.

For example, if one of the topics covered will be pre-K, begin recruitment by reaching out to pre-K providers to identify family leaders who might be a good fit for the family engagement and leadership effort. If you are working on child care subsidy, reach out to providers serving families on subsidy for suggestions of family leaders to invite. Providers often know the families they serve well. They know which family leaders are most engaged and may be interested in sharing their experience.

The second tier to consider for recruitment would be those who may not be directly related to the issues or programs you're focused on, but are similar. For example, if you are focused on pre-K, you might consider reaching out to child care centers or family child care homes serving children who might benefit from pre-K, even though they don't have a program themselves.



The third tier would be those who might also be serving families you are hoping to engage. This might include breastfeeding support groups, the WIC office, food banks, faith communities, community or cultural centers, community Facebook parent groups, library story times, home visiting programs, pediatricians, and more. As your circles move out, the number of potential groups who could provide recommendations will increase.

A fourth tier would be the public itself. You could post information on social media, work with local traditional media to get an article or a story, or place notices in community newsletters letting people know about the opportunity.

How far you will need to reach out will depend on the number of family leaders you are seeking to engage and how broad the range of experiences the work needs to reflect.

## How to recruit?

**Prepare an introductory email or flyer:** In order to recruit, you will first need to develop an explanation of the goals of the program, what it entails, a brief description of what you are looking for in potential family leaders, and what would be expected of them. This should also include a statement indicating the importance of the family leaders reflecting the diversity of the community and a request for assistance in referring family leaders from a range of experiences and backgrounds.

This explanation could be a paragraph or a one-page flyer. It needs to be prepared before you begin recruitment outreach so that it will be available to share with partner organizations via email or in person. Once partners know what you are looking for, they will be better able to identify family leaders who would be a good fit.

**Develop a prospect list:** As you begin outreach, you'll want to ask partners if they can provide names and contact information for individuals they would recommend. It would also be helpful if they could provide a sentence or two about why they think this individual would be a good fit. Depending on the partner, they may want to talk with the person directly to gauge their interest before passing along their name.

**Make contact with family leaders:** The nature of the initial contact will differ depending on whether the referring organization has already discussed the opportunity with the family leader. If so, the initial recruiting contact should be a follow-up call or email to set up a time to discuss the effort in more depth and provide details about what the organization would be looking for in a family leader, what the family leaders should expect from the experience and what would be expected of them, and what support would



be provided. The recruitment meeting is best done in-person or via zoom, though it can be done via phone if necessary.

If the referring partner had not already discussed the effort with the family leader, this initial outreach would be more of a cold call where the recruiter would share an introductory note via email or be prepared to introduce the concept at a high level over the phone. Again, the ask would be to set up a time to talk more in depth.

## **HOLD A RECRUITMENT MEETING: Best done in-person or via zoom**

The recruitment meeting is the organization's chance to ensure that the family leader will be a good fit for this opportunity and for the family leader to decide if this is an effort in which they want to participate. (For additional suggestions on how to lead effective one to one meetings, see the related one to one factsheet.)

### **A recruitment meeting should include:**

- Brief introduction to the group.
- Explanation of what the group is trying to accomplish and how family leaders will be part of this effort.
- An ask if this goal is something that the family leader would be interested in being part of achieving.
- A walk through of the partnership agreement explaining what the commitment of the family leader will be, what they can expect from you, and how they will be supported (stipends and other supports along with staff support).
- An opportunity to answer any questions.
- An invitation to join the initiative if it appears that the family leader is a good fit.

If the family leader indicates they want to be part of the effort, share with them the timeline for the process and next steps, including when they can expect to receive background materials.

Taking the time to ensure that the family leader fully understands the initiative, what would be expected of them, and what support they can expect to receive in return will ground this relationship in trust and transparency from the outset.

## **Why does it matter?**

While it may take more time to recruit family leaders in this manner, it will ensure that those at the table will be those closest to the issues being discussed, are more likely to reflect the diversity of the community, and will fully understand the effort, the expectations on them as a participant, the support they can expect and why their participation is valuable to the efforts' overall success.