



## The Importance of Measuring Community and Patient/Family Engagement for Perinatal Quality Collaboratives (PQCs)

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### Introduction

*“Perinatal Quality Collaboratives (PQCs) are state or multi-state networks of multidisciplinary teams, working to improve maternal and infant health outcomes.”* [1] A key pillar of the PQC model has been engagement of community and patient partners in their quality improvement initiatives. When done effectively, community and patient engagement can foster trust, ensure that healthcare system solutions are centered around the patient, and drive innovative improvements in perinatal care.[2] However, many PQCs have been unable to measure the effectiveness and influence of community and patient partners within organizational decision-making, strategy, and policy development.

A structured measurement framework provides PQCs with a way to assess their engagement practices, set goals for improvement, and align efforts with patient and community needs. This white paper outlines the need for PQCs to measure community and patient engagement, describes the benefits of doing so, and explores how a structured measurement framework can guide teams toward meaningful and transformative engagement.

### Benefits of Measuring Engagement for PQCs, Community Members, and Patients

#### For PQCs:

Engaging patients and communities as partners in healthcare quality improvement and decision-making leads to better maternal and child health outcomes. Their insights help develop interventions that are more responsive to patients’ needs. A structured engagement process (i) builds trust between PQCs and the communities they serve, making community members more likely to actively participate and support initiatives [2] and (ii), helps PQCs assess current practices, refine engagement strategies, and build lasting partnerships with communities. [3] Regular evaluation of engagement practices ensures that PQCs remain committed to patient-centered care and encourages continuous improvement. [4] Meaningful engagement also leads

to more targeted and effective interventions and reducing resource waste on strategies that may not align with patient priorities.

### **For Community Members and Patients:**

A structured engagement process allows community members to move from disengagement to active stakeholders in the PQC's initiatives. Patients who are engaged in decision-making feel that they are impacting the work and improving their understanding of healthcare challenges and their trust in the healthcare system. At higher engagement levels, patient and community members gain valuable skills in quality improvement, data analysis, and healthcare strategy, which enhances their ability to participate meaningfully. Direct input from patients and communities ensures that initiatives align with patients and communities' unique needs, preferences, and cultural contexts. [3]

### **For the Broader Healthcare System:**

Ensuring the integration of community and patient voices in decision-making helps PQC's become an example for hospital systems, who should be developing patient and community partnerships to improve outcomes and address disparities in perinatal care. When patients and communities co-create solutions, patients and communities are more likely to support and spread these initiatives over time, contributing to the long-term effectiveness of healthcare interventions. [6]

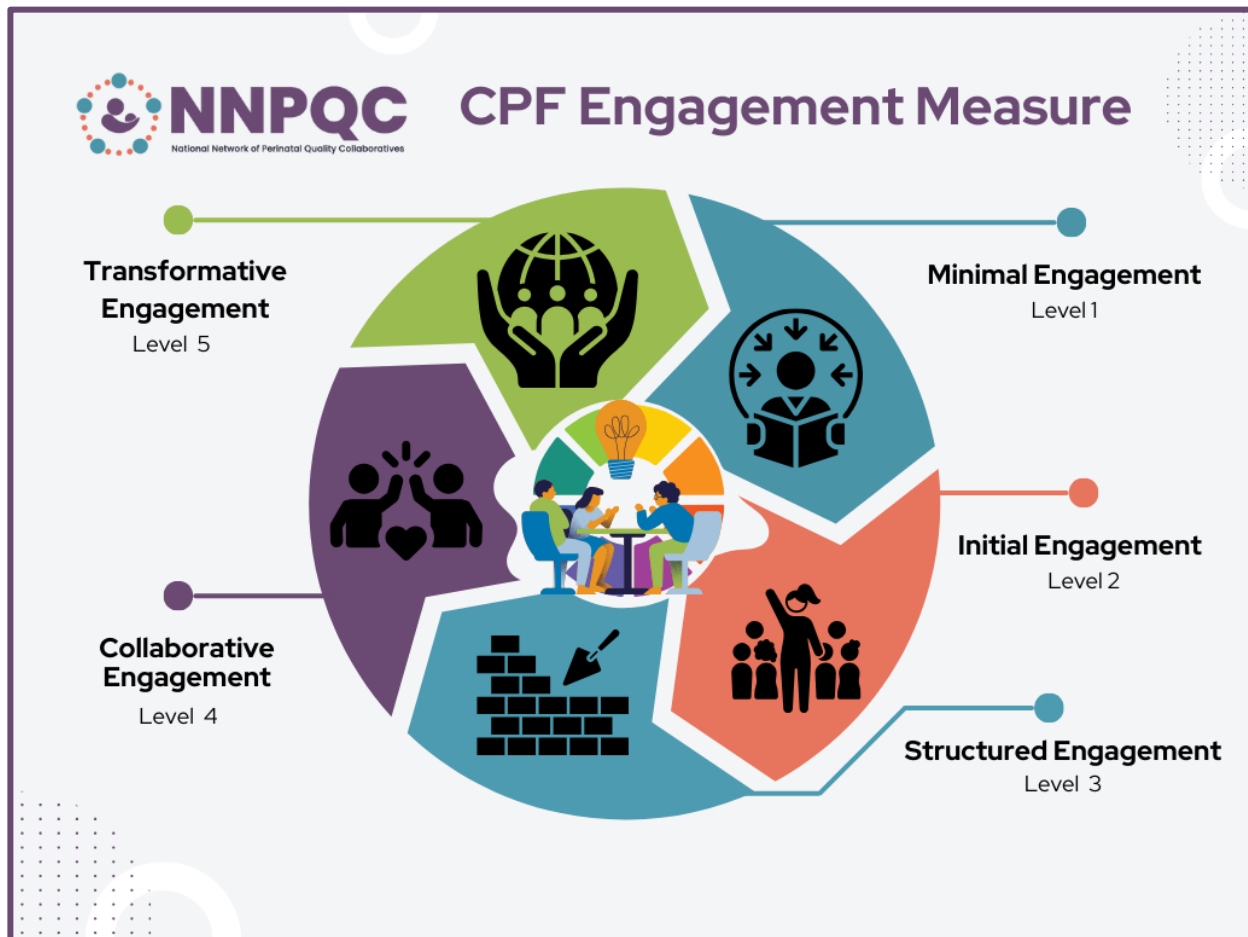
## **The Need for a Measurement Framework for Community and Patient/Family Engagement in PQC's**

Community and patient engagement practices vary widely among PQC's, with many struggling to move beyond basic advisory roles for community and patient partners due to a lack of an engagement structure that best supports the goals of the initiative. This inconsistency can hinder PQC's from fully understanding patient needs, designing patient-centered interventions, and creating sustainable improvement initiatives.

A measurement framework provides a structured approach to evaluating engagement levels and outlining a clear path for progress. The **Community and Patient/Family Engagement Measurement Framework for PQC's**, is structured across five levels (ranging from Minimal Engagement to Transformative Engagement) and, detail specific activities, project team behaviors, and patient/community roles at each stage. By implementing this framework, PQC's can assess their current level of engagement, identify steps for improvement, and set actionable goals to create lasting, meaningful partnerships with patients and communities.

## Community and Patient/Family Engagement Measurement Framework for PQC's

The measurement framework evaluates engagement depth and effectiveness across five levels, from **Minimal Engagement** to **Transformative Engagement**. Each level defines the role of patient and community representatives, their influence on decision-making, and the behaviors that demonstrate meaningful partnership.



**Figure 1:** Community and Patient/Family Engagement Measurement Framework

### Level 1: Minimal Engagement

- **Characteristics:** Engagement is sporadic and primarily symbolic, with limited input from patient/community representatives.
- **Activities:** Participation in select meetings, informal feedback collection through surveys or panels, absence from decision-making roles.
- **Behaviors:** Limited communication, compliance-focused engagement rather than meaningful partnership.

## Level 2: Initial Engagement

- **Characteristics:** Engagement is more structured, but patient/community input remains limited in decision-making.
- **Activities:** Regular feedback sessions, inclusion in committee meetings, compensation via grants, initial database development of a pool of community members and patients for recruitment.
- **Behaviors:** PQC leadership actively seeks feedback but relies primarily on traditional methods (surveys, focus groups). PQCs and community members begin training on engagement and quality improvement.

## Level 3: Structured Engagement

- **Characteristics:** Patient/community representatives take on structured roles, influencing project decisions and shaping initiatives.
- **Activities:** Inclusion in steering committees, documented patient feedback used in project reports, training for staff on patient-centered care, and direct budget allocation for engagement.
- **Behaviors:** PQCs actively incorporate patient perspectives into planning, provide training on leadership and advocacy, and integrate patient/community members into quality improvement activities.

## Level 4: Collaborative Engagement

- **Characteristics:** Patient/community members hold leadership roles, co-create initiatives, and participate in strategic decision-making.
- **Activities:** Paid roles for patient/community members, a lead liaison role, co-developed engagement guidelines, and annual evaluations of engagement efforts.
- **Behaviors:** PQCs foster a culture of co-creation, provide transparent updates, and ensure representation in leadership roles.

## Level 5: Transformative Engagement

- **Characteristics:** Engagement is fully embedded within the PQC structure, with patient/community members in the PQC leadership and decision-making roles at every level.
- **Activities:** Integration into executive committee, mentorship for other PQCs, bi-annual evaluations of engagement, and expansion of engagement programs across hospitals.

- **Behaviors:** A strong commitment to patient-driven outcomes, collaborative initiative design from inception to evaluation, and mutual trust and accountability between PQCs and patient/community members.

### How PQCs Can Measure and Improve Engagement

PQCs can assess and improve their engagement levels by utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The self-assessment tool will allow PQCs to evaluate their current engagement level based on framework criteria, partner contributions to decision-making, and their ability to use partner feedback to improve engagement. PQCs will get partial credit as they strive to reach the next level. This can be improved by gathering insights directly from engaged community members to ensure that PQCs can identify strengths and areas for improvement. Regular reviews and adaptations based on assessments and feedback further refine engagement strategies, allowing PQCs to set clear benchmarks and enhance patient and community involvement. By systematically measuring engagement, PQCs can ensure that patient and community voices remain central to their mission.

### Conclusion: Advancing Toward Meaningful and Transformative Engagement

Measuring community and patient engagement provides a structured pathway from superficial participation to deep, meaningful collaboration and partnership. The **Community and Patient/Family Engagement Measurement Framework** will help PQCs assess current practices, refine engagement strategies, and build lasting partnerships with communities.

By progressing through the framework, PQCs can make significant strides in improving maternal and child health outcomes, addressing health disparities, and creating sustainable, patient-centered interventions. Ultimately, structured engagement ensures that patient and community voices do more than inform decisions – they actively shape the future of perinatal care.

## References:

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