

FAP: Community Engagement Reflections

Between October 2024 and May 2025, the Follow Along Program (FAP) convened a Community Engagement Team (CET), which met virtually seven times for two-hour sessions. These gatherings brought together a broad and diverse group of participants from across Minnesota—including parents, childcare providers, school and Head Start staff, healthcare and Tribal health professionals, public health, community organizations, and state agency partners. The rich cultural representation and cross-sector collaboration were key to shaping thoughtful, inclusive input for the Follow Along Program redesign. In July 2025, the CET provided feedback highlighting both growth and ongoing challenges.

Key insights

Increased appreciation and awareness: Most participants shared that their understanding of the FAP increased because of their engagement on the CET. Several shared that they were previously unaware of the program but now see it as a critical resource for child development and family support.

- *I really enjoyed learning about the Follow Along Program, having not known about it at all to now sharing details about it with all my pregnant friends and family. I have also learned about the complexity with which the program operates because of the various local government partners, health professionals, and other community members that make the program successful and resource-relevant for parents and families.*

Real world application: Participants report applying lessons they learned to improve cultural responsiveness in their professional practices, advocate for families, and share information about FAP widely. Several shared that they now consider literacy levels, language differences, and cultural contexts when creating materials or planning programs. Many shared they actively promote FAP with friends, clients, coworkers, and community groups.

- *I no longer assume just because someone speaks a language, that they can also read and write in it. This is something to take note of when I'm creating marketing materials.*

Persistent barriers: Challenges remain in program accessibility, parent retention, and community education and outreach. Suggested priorities include addressing language barriers, trust-building, and outreach to underrepresented communities.

- *I think the issue around retention of parents is one that needs to be resolved. The marketing materials can greatly improve, but if the program is not easy enough for parents to submit the forms, then all that hard work getting them into the program would go to waste.*

Future focus: Recommendations include building trust with families, maintaining co-design practices, expanding outreach, streamlining processes, and enhancing collaboration with other providers.

- *Continue bringing families to the table, continue using a co-design approach when making adjustments to programming.*

Suggested next steps

- Continue regular collaborative meetings including those with parents and community partners.
- Prioritize outreach strategies that are culturally relevant, accessible, and ongoing.
- Implement tools and activities that support retention and build pathways to resources for families.
- Monitor and adapt program processes to reduce barriers and build trust.