

# Engaging Low-Income Partners in the Value Chain

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THE ASPEN INSTITUTE  
Community   
Strategies Group

*“Grasstops without grassroots get blown away in the wind.  
Sustenance comes from the roots.”*

# Lasting Livelihoods



*Increasing:*  
**Upward mobility**  
**Resilience**  
**Future prospects**

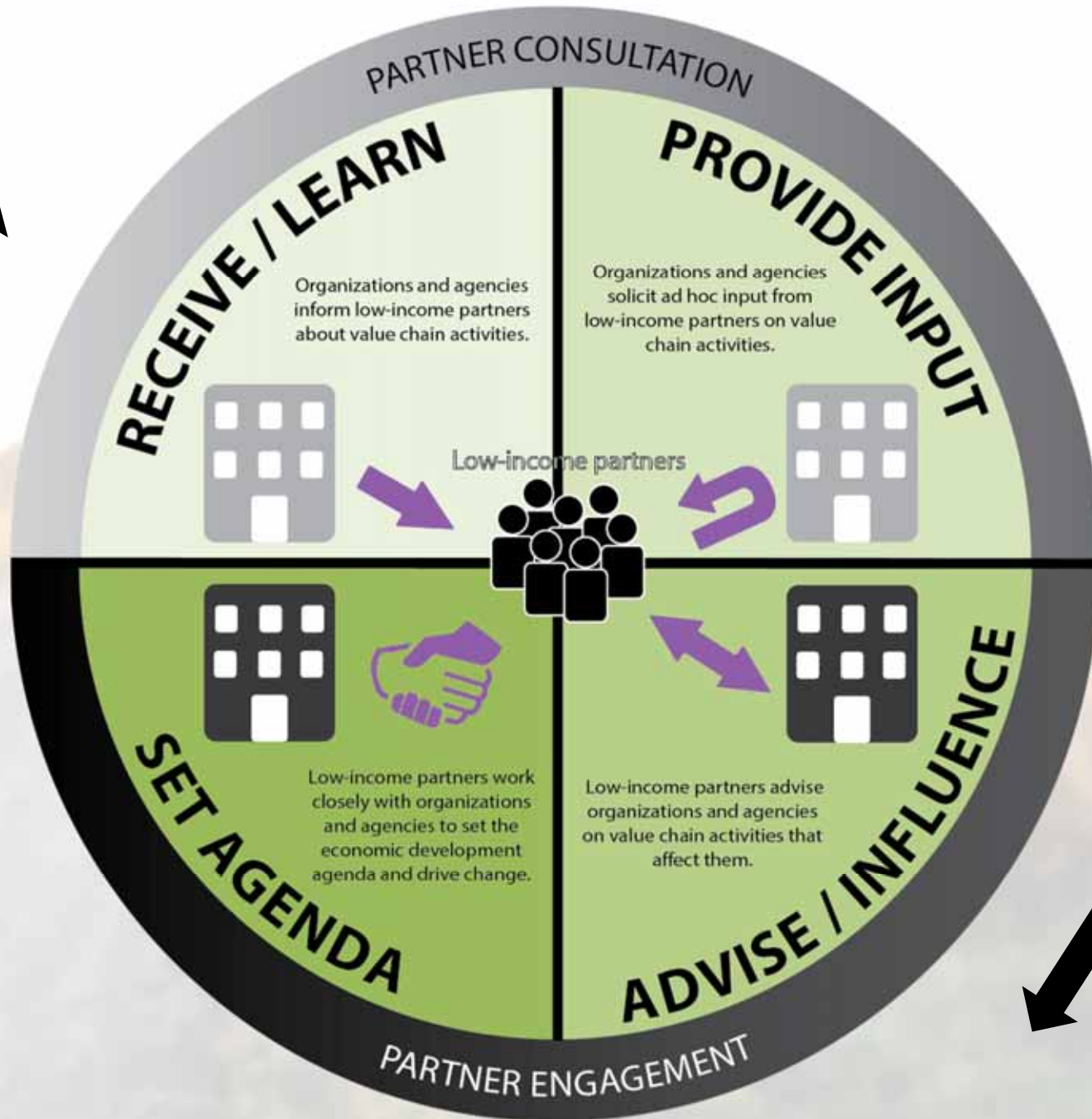


**How do we choose, organize or adjust  
our economic or community  
development strategy so that those on  
the margins can **participate** in its design,  
and so that they will **benefit** from it?**

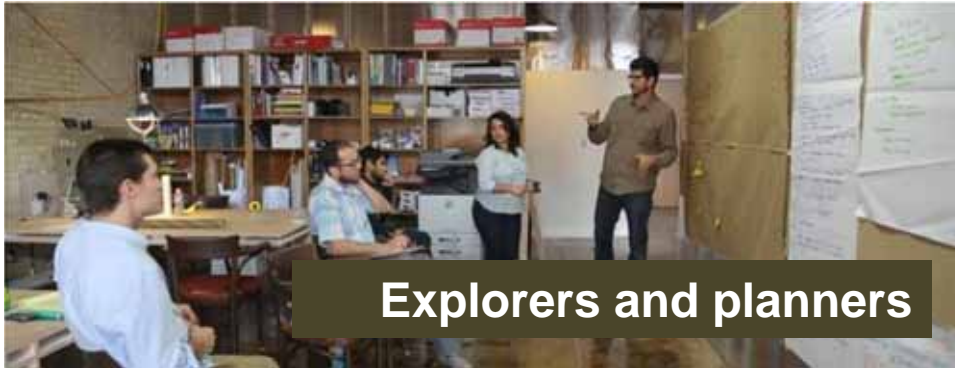
# Engaging low-income people as partners

- Working **with** low-income community members to identify the kind changes they want to see in their community and supporting them in pursuing their goals.
- Ensuring that community change is accomplished by working ***in partnership*** with low-income community members, rather than doing things for them or to them.

Start here

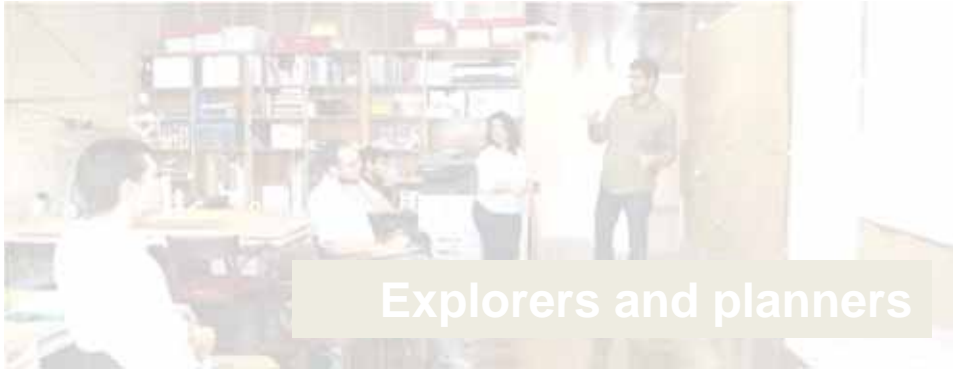


# Opportunities to engage as...



Value chain exploration and planning provides opportunities for lower-income residents to share ideas for how to help meet the needs and interests of low-income people

# Opportunities to engage as...



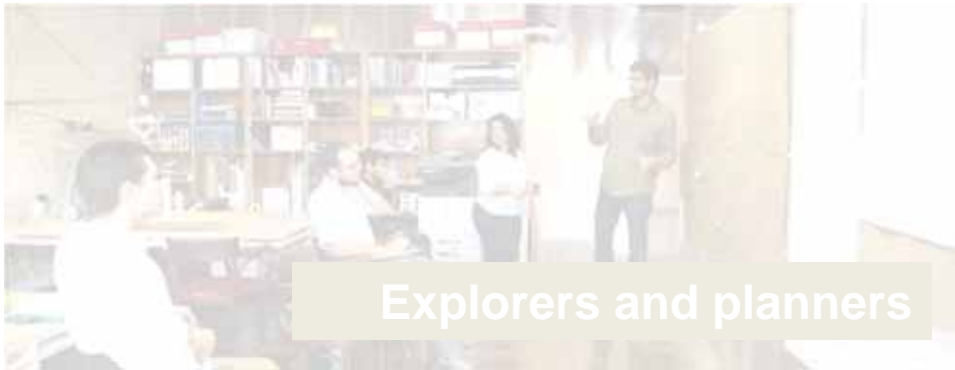
Explorers and planners



Producers or suppliers

Value chains can provide opportunities for lower-income producers and suppliers to connect to new or growing markets

# Opportunities to engage as...



Explorers and planners



Producers or suppliers

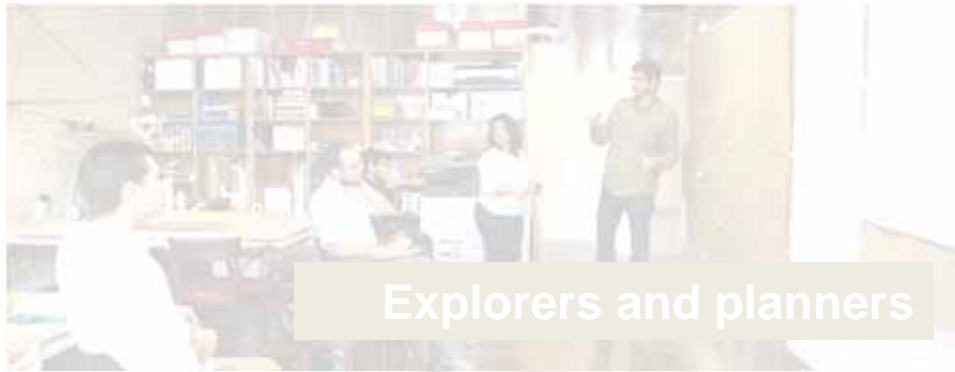


Employees

Value chains can provide opportunities for lower-income employees to move into new or better jobs, sometimes with ownership potential



# Opportunities to engage as...



Explorers and planners



Producers or suppliers



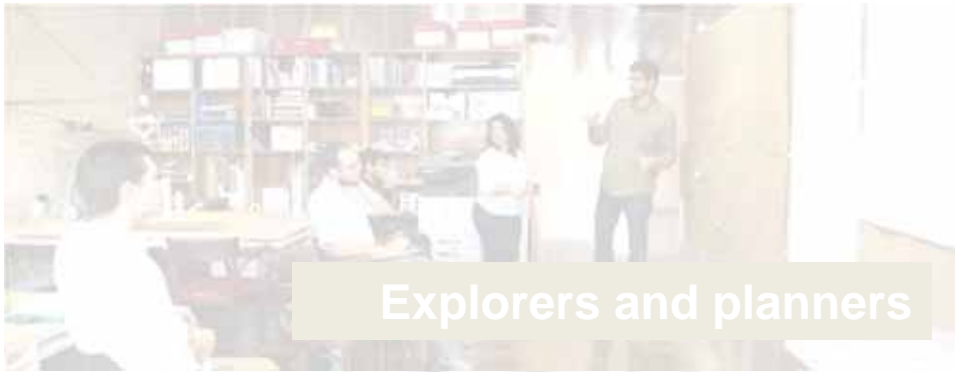
Employees



Owners of assets

Value chains help bring underutilized assets into production - saving costs or generating income for the lower-income people who own those assets

# Opportunities to engage as...



Explorers and planners



Producers or suppliers



Employees



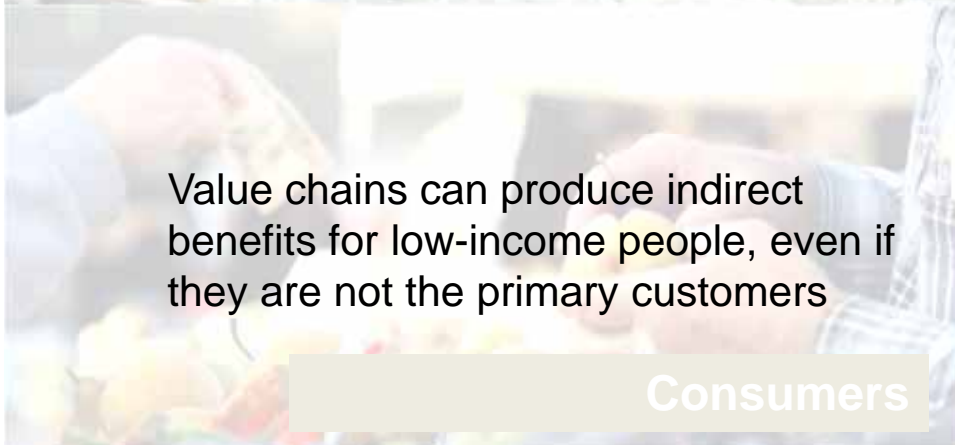
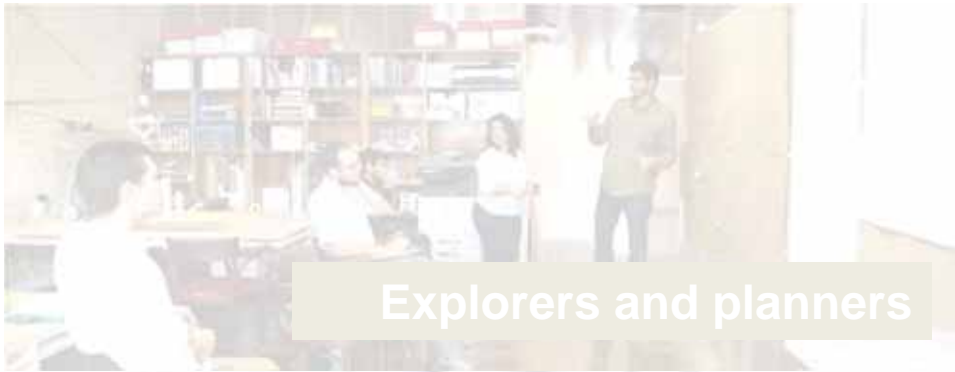
Owners of assets



Consumers

Value chains can provide opportunities for lower-income consumers to save money and/or access higher quality goods and services

# Opportunities to engage as...



# Caveats

- All levels of partner consultation and engagement are important and may be employed simultaneously
- Successful partner engagement looks different from place to place and from value chain to value chain
- Different people will be engaged at different points in the process – and that's ok!
- It takes a broad range of actors being engaged – not just those on the margins – to build a successful value chain. The challenge is finding the right balance.
- “Change moves at the speed of trust” – approaching this work with respect and humility is critical. Takes time to build social capital.

# A few examples...



**Explorers and planners**



**Producers or suppliers**



**Employees**



**Owners of assets**



**Consumers**



**Beneficiaries**

# Think about your own value chain...

- Where are you already working with low-income partners?
- How are you engaging them in the value chain?  
*Consultation/engagement/both?*
- Where might you begin to engage low-income partners more intentionally in the value chain?  
Where are the greatest leverage points?
- What one challenge or question do you have about engaging low-income partners in your value chain?

# Your Turn

## Four breakout groups:

Engaging low-income partners as...

### 1. **Planners / explorers**

*choosing/developing value chains that meet the needs/interests of low-income*

### 2. **Producers / suppliers**

*organizing value chains that work for low-income producers, suppliers, and entrepreneurs*

### 3. **Employees**

*organizing value chains that work for low-income employees*

### 4. **Consumers / beneficiaries**

*designing products and services for low-income benefit*

## Group discussion:

- Each person shares one question/challenge you have related to engaging low-income partners in your value chain efforts
- Let those questions guide the conversation

## What to listen for:

- *Strategies* others are using to engage low-income partners in various roles
- How engaging low-income residents has *benefited* value chain efforts / *challenges* you have faced

## Report Back:

**Top 3** key insights from the group's conversation