

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

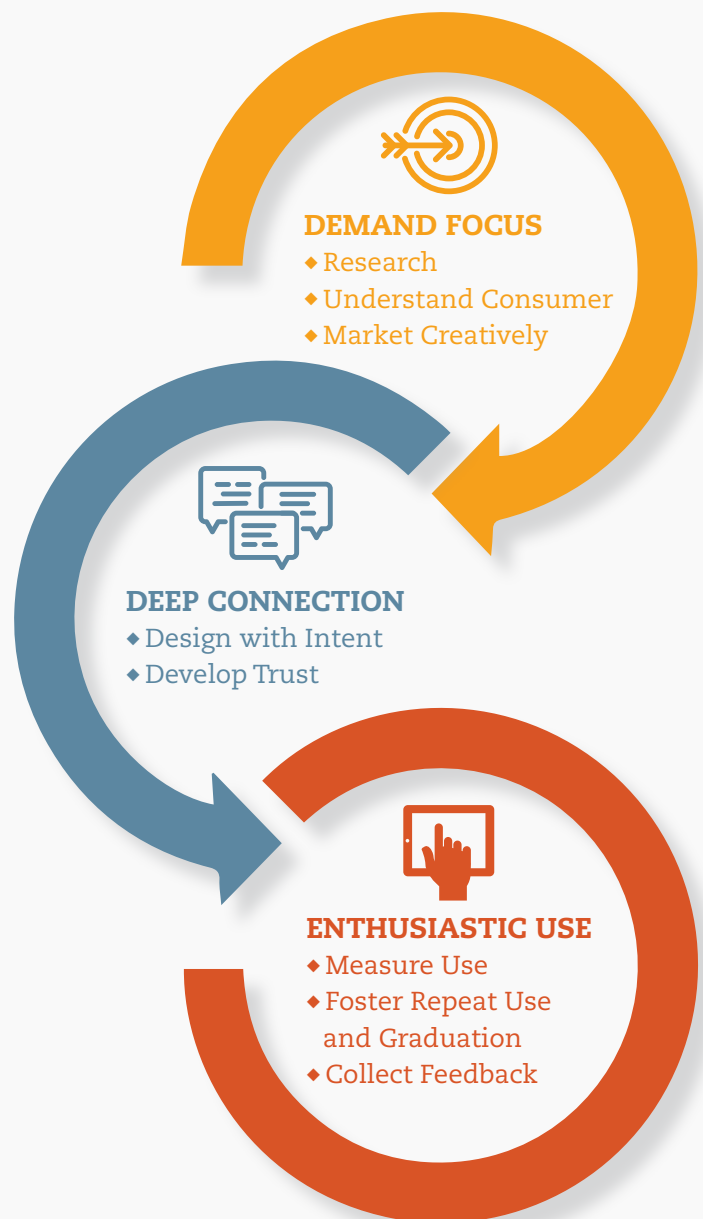
Helping People Want What They Need

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Developing or delivering a product, tool, or service that meets consumers' needs and leads to impactful behavior change is a significant challenge. Simply creating tools to foster financial security has not been enough to ensure that consumers will use them, much less benefit from them. Consumer engagement is an approach to tackling these key challenges that focuses on the needs, expectations, and realities of those being served by financial empowerment practitioners.

Consumer Engagement: Helping People Want What They Need describes both a philosophy and a process for developing and delivering financial products and services. At the core is the consumer, who is the intended target of financial empowerment efforts and the key stakeholder; he/she is the actor who ultimately decides what tools to use and is an indispensable source of intelligence about his/her needs and wants.

Three pillars define consumer engagement, each of which informs and relies on the others: Demand Focus, Deep Connection, and Enthusiastic Use.



FUNDERS' ROLE IN PROMOTING CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT

Consumer engagement is a framework to think about and attack the challenge of meeting a consumer's needs while encouraging impactful change. Funders should view the term and associated concepts as a tool to focus practitioners' attention, and as a conceptual framework to gradually shift priorities over time. In this way, funders can address the responsibility they carry to ensure scarce and precious resources are deployed to deliver the most benefit for individual households, and the largest impact for society at large.

Grantmaker priorities and behavior are crucial levers to encourage consumer engagement in financial empowerment work. The following recommendations explain how funders can support a consumer engagement approach.

ALLOW CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT CONCEPTS TO INFORM YOUR GRANTMAKING STRATEGY

As you communicate with fellow funders and prospective grantees, several fundamental consumer engagement concepts are important to keep in mind:

- Beneficiaries are the consumers.
- Impact is multidimensional.
- The unconventional hold opportunity.
- It takes time.
- Refinement can generate excitement.

CHALLENGE GRANT SEEKERS TO EMPLOY CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Grantmakers' questions and expectations have a powerful effect on how grant seekers think about their work. Asking key questions can nudge

grantees toward consumer engagement strategies. For example:

- How will this product or service generate enthusiastic, voluntary consumer use?
- How will this product or service foster a deep relationship between provider and consumer?
- How will your organization foster consumer demand for this product or service?

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT WHEN CONSIDERING FUNDING PROPOSALS

While prospective grantees may not use the label "consumer engagement" to describe their work, promising proposals should demonstrate ideas described in the full brief, *Consumer Engagement: Helping People Want What They Need*. Things to look for include:

- Original and secondary consumer research.
- Consumer role in development.
- Openness to evolution.
- Evaluation framework.

“ENGAGING CONSUMERS IN A WAY THAT MAKES THEM ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT YOUR PRODUCTS and services is the goal—but it is also hard to do. Because we believe in the power of financial services to help low-income people reach their aspirations—homeownership, a healthy family, educated kids, a dependable car to get to work—it’s imperative for us to make these dreams a reality.”

EVELYN STARK
METLIFE FOUNDATION