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# **ENHANCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: TOOLS AND RESOURCES FOR PRACTITIONERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS AND CITIZENS**



**Penn State Extension**

## We'll Talk About...

- Defining engagement and why it matters
- Guiding principles and keys to success
- Key concepts and strategies for improving processes and outcomes
- A brief overview of the Engagement Toolbox

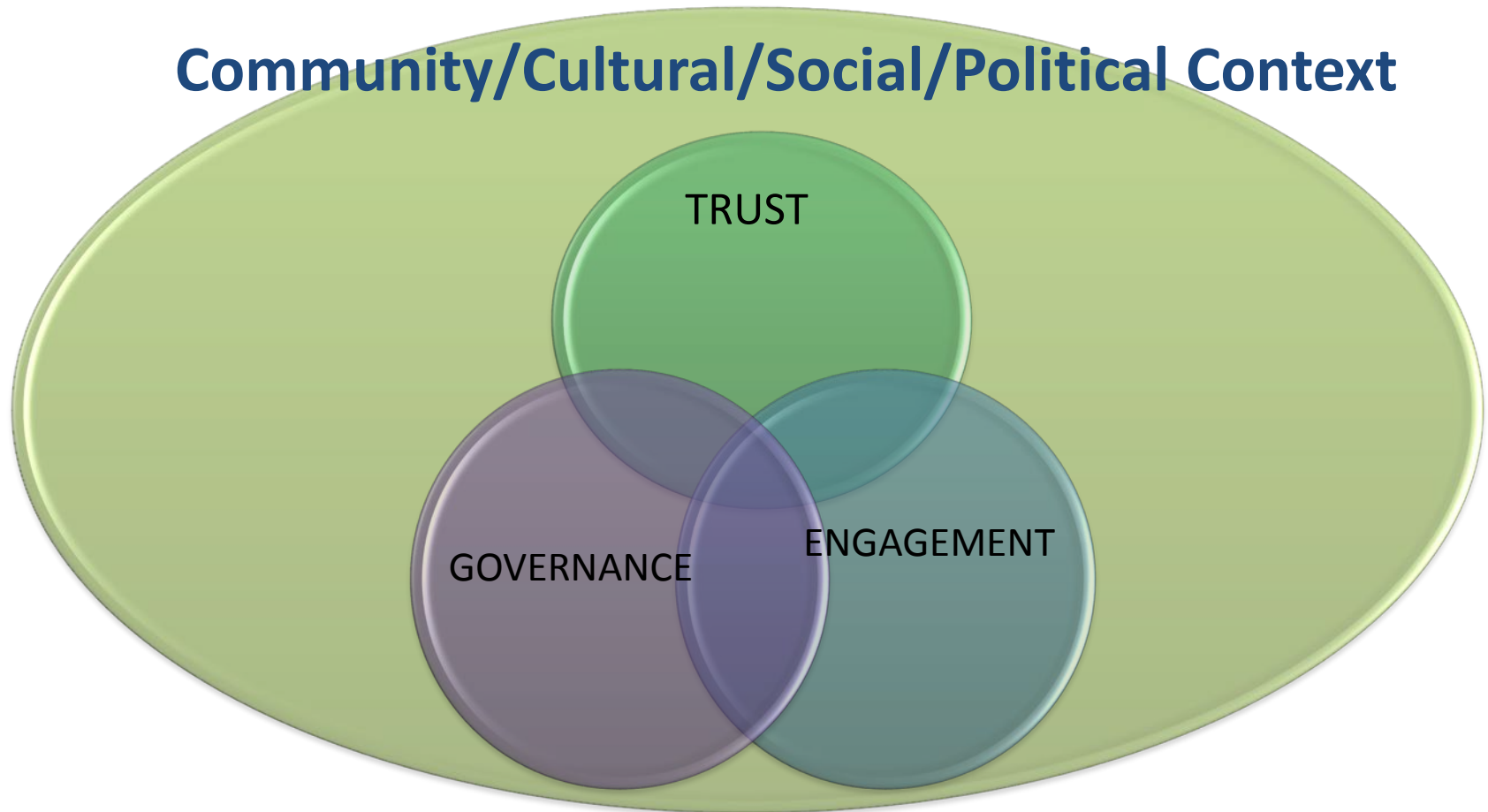
## Experiences to Date

- Trainings and workshops
- Community assistance and consultation
- Toolbox development
- Australia Invasive Species



# Community Engagement in Context

Community/Cultural/Social/Political Context



## Redefining Community Engagement...

*As an integrated, proactive, relationship-building approach to community participation and decision-making*

- More than a communications plan
- More than public relations
- Goes beyond getting input from clients or constituents

## Citizens are “engaged” when they play an effective role in:

- Community learning
- Relationship building
- Priority-setting
- Decision-making
- Implementation



## Effective Engagement...

- Encompasses strategies and processes that are sensitive to the community-context in which it occurs
- Requires letting go of some of the traditional reins of power and trusting that citizens, and partner organizations, agencies, or governments can and will effectively engage in the issues
- Builds effective and genuine partnerships

## Effective Community Engagement Offers Opportunities to...

- Create local networks
- Build social capital
- Create opportunities for identifying concerns and underlying values
- Increase trust in community organizations and local governance
- Leverage assets
- Avoid conflict and controversy





# Community Engagement Practice....

- There really is **no singular 'engagement model'** that fits all or even most circumstances
- **Experience and evidence-based approaches** offer the strongest foundation for success



# Core Principles for Engagement

- Careful planning and preparation
- Inclusion and demographic diversity
- Collaboration and shared purpose
- Openness and learning
- Transparency and trust
- Impact and action
- Sustained engagement and participatory culture

## Success Means Ensuring...

- **Consensus** around goals and intended outcomes
- **Commitment** to responsiveness and effective communication
- **Process** design and implementation are consistent with outcomes and goals
- **Paying attention** to motivations for participation and differing values
- **Learning** (and modeling) the art of good questions

# Integrating and *Respecting* of All Knowledge Types

- Local knowledge
- Historical knowledge
- Managerial, legal and regulatory knowledge
- Institutional knowledge
- Scientific knowledge



# Critical Considerations

- What are your engagement goals?
  - Engagement according to whom and how? Organizers and the public may not always agree on what constitutes successful PP
- What is the **scale and authority** of your issue or intention?
  - Who are your stakeholders? Who has authority? What is the breadth of their authority?
- How do these things **influence your engagement strategies, goals or processes** – or likely success?

# Ensuring 'Alignment'

- Fostering integrity and consistency
  - Ensuring internal organizational or programmatic goals, policies and procedures do not work at cross-purposes to engagement goals or commitments
  - Enabling internally, a comprehensive understanding of, agreement with, and support for engagement goals, processes, expectations and strategies

***Effective engagement frequently requires both internal and community-based considerations and strategies***

# THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF TRUST



## Trust Matters

- You can't have effective engagement without it!
- Is a **critical element in long-term success and participation**
- Fostering and building it doesn't just happen – it takes **thoughtful and purposeful approaches**
- We're in a volatile era of **diminishing trust** - everywhere





## Trend Drivers...

- Perceptions of bias
- Limited engagement with understanding of process
- Political polarization
- Violated expectations
- Persistence of ‘wicked issues’
- Increased distance between professionals & citizens
- Speed and ‘balkanization’ of information sources (social media)



# IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT *PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES*



# The Critical Elements



## Goals - Clarity & Communication!!

- Be clear and open about the purposes of convening
- Communicate these goals in clear and unambiguous terms
- Anticipate the sources of the 'messiness' you hope work through
- Ensure integrity - set (and communicate) realistic goals for the process – and meet them

# Penn State Extension

## iap2 public participation spectrum

developed by the international association for public participation



	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fact sheets</li> <li>• Websites</li> <li>• Open houses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public comment</li> <li>• Focus groups</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Public meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops</li> <li>• Deliberate polling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen Advisory committees</li> <li>• Consensus-building</li> <li>• Participatory decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Citizen juries</li> <li>• Ballots</li> <li>• Delegated decisions</li> </ul>

## Predicting Successful Outcomes

- Environment – leadership support, community context
- Organization characteristics - bureaucratic v. organic?  
Red tape? Hierarchical authority
- Involvement mechanisms
- Participant characteristics and competence

*In Yang and Pandey (2011) multiple methods, participant competence, elected official support, red tape, hierarchical authority and transformation leadership were significant predictors. Community and government structure were not.*

Adapted from: Yang and Pandey, *Further Dissecting the Black Box of Citizen Participation: When Does Citizen Involvement Lead to Good Outcomes?* Public Administration Review. Nov-Dec., 2011

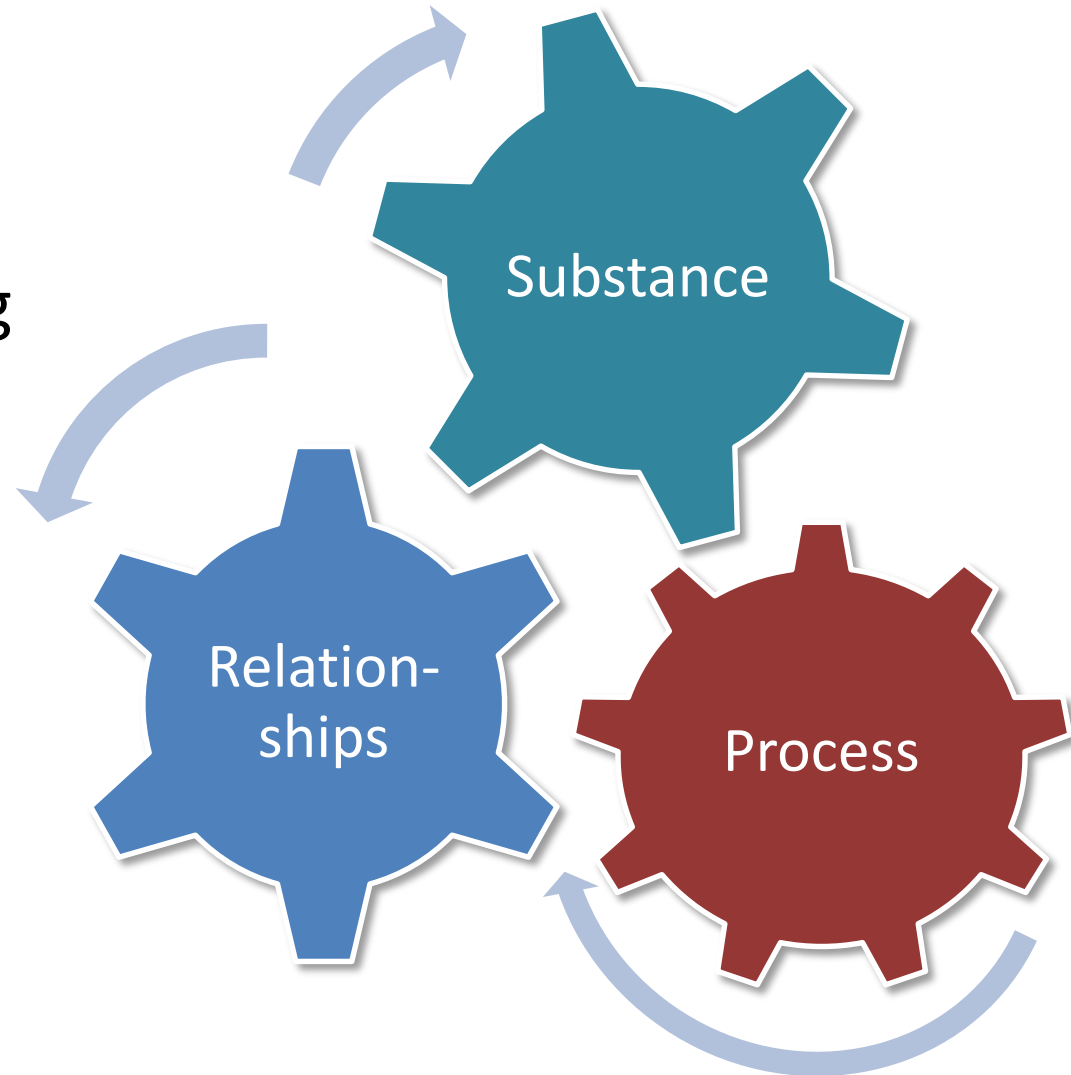
*Values, Practices, and Processes*

# **FACILITATING EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT**



## Developing Solutions

- **Substance** – the ‘what’ of the issue
- **Relationships** – existing or fostered over the course of the negotiation
- **Process** – the preparation, conducting, and follow through





# Facilitation - Focus on the Fostering *Productive* Discussions

- Separate *people* from the *problem*
- Focus on *interests*, not *positions*
- Invent options for *mutual gain*
- Insist on using *objective criteria*

*Source: Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, Harvard Negotiating Project, Penguin Press*

## Debate, Dialogue, & Deliberation

Debate	Dialogue	Deliberation
Compete	Exchange	Weigh
Argue	Discuss	Choose
Promote option	Builds relationships	Makes choices
Seek majority	Understand	Seek overlap
Persuade	Seek understanding	Seek common ground
Dig in	Reach across	Framed to make choices
Tight structure	Loose structure	Flexible structure
Usually fast	Usually slow	Usually slow
Win/lose	No decision	Common ground
Community division	Enhanced trust	Legitimacy and buy-in

# Building an Engagement Plan

- Define the issue
- Identify the purpose(s) and degree of citizen engagement
- Identify tools for engaging citizens
- Identify individuals and groups that need to be involved
- Develop a plan for recruiting and retaining participants
- Create a positive environment for citizen engagement
- Develop evaluation criteria and decide next steps
- Maintain open lines of communication

# Getting Them to Come Back...

## Participant Expectations

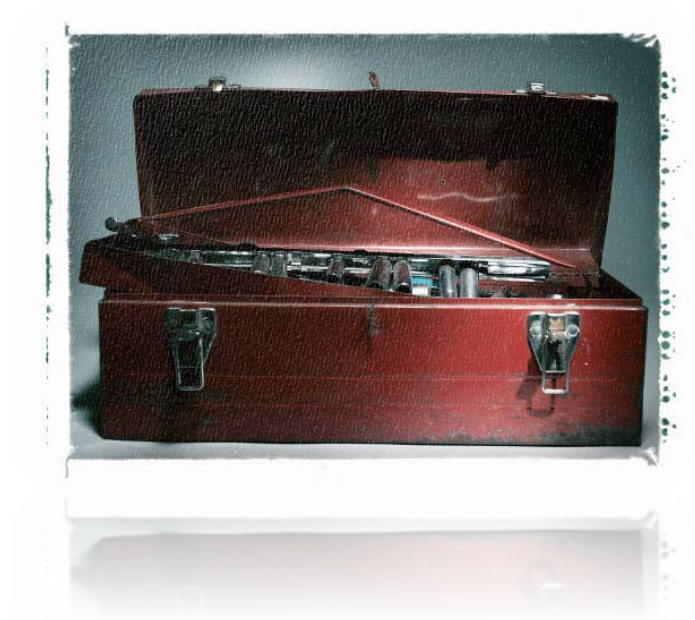
- Cost-benefit
- Information
- Time
- Dialogue
- Knowledge
- Outcome

## In Summary...

- Trust and relationships matters
- Effective engagement is multi-faceted, variable, and driven by community context
- Careful planning matters – with a commitment to responsiveness, reciprocity, and effective communication
- Process design and implementation must be consistent with outcomes and goals
- Solid information is essential
- Build your facilitation and process ‘toolbox’
- Evaluating and assessing your outcomes and processes is critical
- It takes TIME & RESOURCES!

*Brief Overview*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLBOX





## Center for Economic and Community Development

### Engagement Toolbox

[About This Toolbox](#)

[Community Engagement -  
Overview](#)

[Establishing Your  
Engagement Goals](#)

[The Role and Importance of  
Building Trust](#)

[Facilitating Community  
Engagement](#)

[Planning Your Engagement  
Efforts](#)

[Framing and Issue  
Identification](#)

[Managing Conflict and  
Difficult Public Issues](#)

[Evaluating Engagement  
Efforts](#)

[Online Engagement and  
Opportunities](#)

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AgSci » AESE » Research » Centers » CECD » Engagement Toolbox



## Engagement Toolbox



Effective community engagement seeks to better engage the community to achieve long-term and sustainable outcomes, processes, relationships, discourse, and decision-making in a community-context sensitive environment.

Engagement is not generally driven by a 'model' so much as by a framework of guiding principles, strategies, and approaches. This framework is based on principles that respect the right of all community members to be informed, consulted, involved and empowered and employs a range of tools and strategies to ensure success. It also places a premium on fostering and enhancing trust as a critical element in long-term, sustainable engagement and effective governance.

The tools and resources provided here are intended to help you assess your engagement needs, plan for effective strategies and processes, as well as implement and monitor your engagement efforts.

## Contact Information

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