



Engagementworks

Community Engagement Basics

Session 2 – Video 1

**The Benefits of Community
Engagement**

The Benefits of Community Engagement

Introduction

In this lesson we say why community engagement is important and we focus on the benefits.

Why is community engagement important?

Community engagement is important because it –

- is a core principle of democracy
- leads to more efficient and effective decisions



Now let's just expand on this a bit.

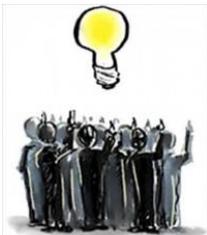
The political framework in a democratic society requires citizens to be involved, informed and engaged.

A 'government of the people' cannot function if there are no avenues for civic involvement, no methods for community deliberation, or no opportunities to influence government decisions.

Elections, petitions, and public deliberation are all a form of civic participation.

It is the role of the people to exercise these rights to participate, and the responsibility of the government to respond and respect them.

Experts versus the Crowd



There is a persistent "expert-bias" in decision-making. The general intuition being that those who are steeped in the subject matter will make more informed decisions than say, a random group of strangers.

Some parts of this assumption are correct, most importantly that having access to quality information is key in decision-making.

However, it has been shown time and time again that crowds make smarter decisions than experts, given the right conditions.

We will be expanding on this in a latter lesson.

Benefits

The benefits of engaging with the community or stakeholders are that it -

- focuses on social justice
- helps shape services
- helps build trust
- helps with outreach
- connects people and resources
- develops new leaders
- creates an opportunity for critical reflection



Now let's take a look at these benefits in a bit more detail.

Focuses on social justice: It is through community engagement that community wisdom and science work in tandem to ensure a more balanced set of political, social, economic and cultural priorities, resulting in shared resources and shared power, thus leading to equity and social justice.



Helps shape services: Including a broad array of community residents from the beginning of a planning process will help shape services so they are culturally acceptable and more closely meet specific needs.



Helps build trust: Inviting leadership from community groups will help demonstrate that their participation is valued and that their views will be considered. This can help to build trust, increase communication and create openness to utilizing services.

Helps with outreach: More residents will feel involved with community activities and decisions and will be able to explain or interpret them positively to others. Spreading the word through this informal approach will improve outreach.

Connects people and resources: Community engagement efforts improve connections between individuals, community associations, businesses, and churches, which in turn creates greater community "buy-in."



Develops new leaders: Inviting community members and leaders of community groups into planning processes will help in the identification of champions and development of leaders who understand public policy issues.



Creates an opportunity for critical reflection: Community engagement processes provide opportunities for cooperative, co-learning experiences, and critical reflection that benefits from community wisdom.

Potential benefits to participants include:

- networking opportunities,
- access to information and resources,
- personal recognition,
- skill enhancement, and a
- sense of contribution and helpfulness in solving community problems.



Conclusion

This session builds on the lessons in session 1 where we discussed what the terms mean, looked at the levels of engagement, the spectrum and the OECD principles

We begin to see from this lesson why it is important and what the benefits are.

