Creating a Public Engagement Plan

An infographic tool to support the development of a meaningful, community-centered engagement project.

Developed through a collaboration between the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington (I-LABS) and the Center for Advancing Research Impact in Society (ARIS).

Introduction:

There are more opportunities than ever to engage in community focused work. But with so many options, how do researchers and organizations create a focused, meaningful plan?

This tool is designed as a quick-start framework to support the initial ideation and development of a project. The tool centers audiences' needs and the importance of building partnerships in project development. It also prompts the user to consider project logistics, build a logic model, and draft plans for sharing and receiving feedback about the work. An accompanying list highlights resources from across the broader impacts and public engagement communities.

Sections:

Outlining Goals

Understanding Audiences

Working in Community

Finding Inspiration

Developing a Logic Model

Sharing & Feedback

Three ideas for using this framework:

Brainstorm a Public Engagment Plan

Whether this is your first or your tenth public engagement project, use the framework as a tool to help you think through the process of developing a community-focused plan. You can do this as a team, or as an individual.

Inform a Broader Impacts Statement

Work through this framework to explore options and avenues for public engagement that can be incorporated into a broader impacts statement.

Support Professional Development

Use this tool in workshops, trainings, or one-on-one consultations to support researchers and organizations develop public engagement plans.

Creating a Public Engagement Plan

Developing an impactful public engagement plan isn't a top down, one way process. Instead it is about building authentic, reciprocal relationships. Use this flow chart as a first step to think through and develop an engagement plan.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACHIEVE?

Through public outreach, you can share a key message or finding, support others as they engage more deeply with research, and build your professional skills and portfolio. Think through how you could engage in each of these areas as you build an engagement plan.

SHARE A KEY MESSAGE OR FINDING

WHAT'S YOUR KEY MESSAGE?

NOW, MAKE IT SHORTER

INCREASE ACCESS OR ENGAGEMENT

How can this work support greater access to, or engagement with, research?

BUILD PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

Public engagement builds your professional portfolio. How does this project intersect with your professional goals or development?

MERGING GOALS WITH AUDIENCE NEEDS

While outreach puts its emphasis on sharing information, engagement is about a back and forth relationship. To develop an engagement plan, outreach goals need to be merged with community needs. Start by thinking about who you would like to engage with.

WHO WOULD YOU LIKE TO ENGAGE WITH?

- EDUCATORS ○
- LEARNERS, K-12 ○
- LEARNERS, HIGHER ED ○
- ADULT LEARNERS ○
- ○ COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS
- ○ NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
- ○ INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES
- ○ POLICYMAKERS

WHO ELSE? - - - - - - - - - - - -

WHAT COMMUNITIES CAN YOU CONNECT WITH?

- EDUCATION ○
- GOVERNMENT BODIES ○
- NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS ○
- RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND ○
  CONGREGATIONS
- ○ COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
- ○ HOBBY OR SOCIAL GROUPS
- ○ POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS
- ○ BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL
  ASSOCIATIONS

WHO ELSE? - - - - - - - - - - - -

What are the Audience's Needs?

Understanding audience needs is **THE** key step in creating an impactful engagement project.

How do you know what the audience needs? Here are three key ways:

Talk to a representative from the community you are interested in working with.

Talk to someone who has done outreach work in that community.

Spend time in and with the community to deepen your knowledge and understanding.

Strengthen Your Relationship

WORKING IN COMMUNITY

Developing authentic partnerships and taking the time to thoroughly understand audiences needs deepens your work and your connection to communities.

Consider a Needs Assessment

What type of information or product would be most useful to your audience? Conducting a needs assessment is an excellent way to build understanding.

What is a key need of your audience?

What resource could you provide that would help meet that need?

Build a Partnership

Building authentic partnerships with communities is the best way to build reciprocal models of engagement and be impactful.
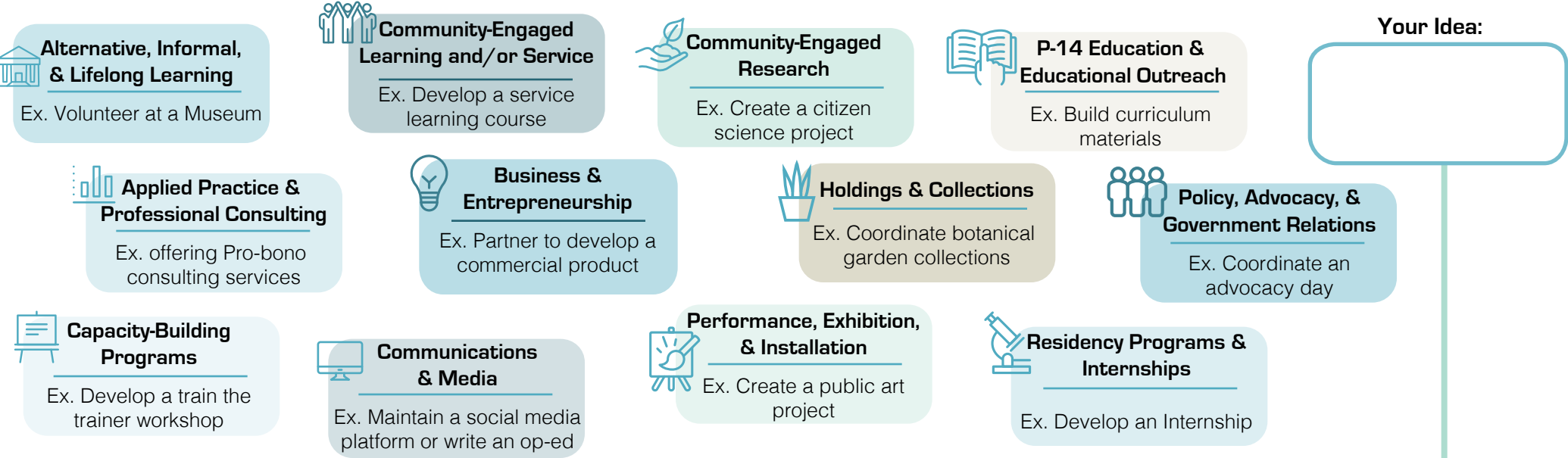
Can you think of possible community partners?

- ●
- ●
- ●

FINDING INSPIRATION

For inspiration, explore these twelve domains[1] of public engagement. Keep your skills in mind: are you an engaging speaker? An artist? As you explore, remember to center community needs.

Alternative, Informal, & Lifelong Learning
Ex. Volunteer at a Museum

Community-Engaged Learning and/or Service
Ex. Develop a service learning course

Community-Engaged Research
Ex. Create a citizen science project

P-14 Education & Educational Outreach
Ex. Build curriculum materials

Your Idea:

Applied Practice & Professional Consulting
Ex. offering Pro-bono consulting services

Business & Entrepreneurship
Ex. Partner to develop a commercial product

Holdings & Collections
Ex. Coordinate botanical garden collections

Policy, Advocacy, & Government Relations
Ex. Coordinate an advocacy day

Capacity-Building Programs
Ex. Develop a train the trainer workshop

Communications & Media
Ex. Maintain a social media platform or write an op-ed

Performance, Exhibition, & Installation
Ex. Create a public art project

Residency Programs & Internships
Ex. Develop an Internship

DESIGNING YOUR PROJECT

Logistics ///
Depending on your activity, especially if it is an in-person event, logistics are essential.

Space - where will this take pace?

Publicity - how will you advertise?

Permissions - what permits are needed?

Privacy - how will consent be managed?

Things to Consider

Time 〜
How much time do you or your team have to devote to a project? In your calculations, include time for prep, evaluation, and follow up.

○ A week   ○ A few hours a week
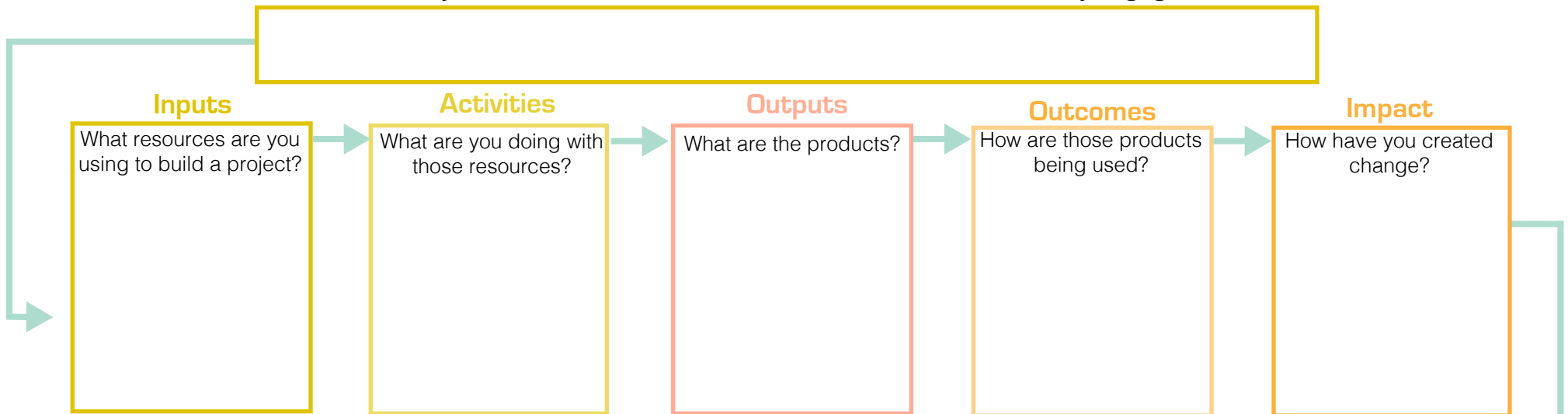○ A few days a month   ○ A month or more

Budget ●●●
What is your budget? Consider the costs associated with time and production.

○ Development costs   ○ Personnel time
○ Production costs   ○ Evaluation costs

GOT AN IDEA?

Building a logic model by outlining outcomes and impact supports the development of a successful project.

How does your idea meet audience needs and facilitate community engagement?

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
What resources are you using to build a project?	What are you doing with those resources?	What are the products?	How are those products being used?	How have you created change?

SHARING & FEEDBACK

Developing authentic partnerships and taking the time to thoroughly understand audiences needs, deepens your work and your connection to communities.

How Will You Share Your Work?

Communicating about your engagement work is just as important as communicating about your research! How will you let your audiences and communities know about the work you did or are planning to do? What platforms and methods could you use?

How Will You Get Feedback?

Collecting feedback from the community is a key. There are many ways to do this, from in-person interviews, to online polls, to questionnaires. List three potential methods:
●
●
●

When Will You Collect Feedback?

Plan to collect feedback throughout the development, implementation, and completion of the project. Outline possible points to collect this feedback.

ARIS
Advancing Research Impact in Society

INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING & BRAIN SCIENCES

Resources for Creating a Public Engagement Plan

Constructing a Broader Impacts Statement

The Broader Impact (BI) Wizard helps users develop an outline of important points to include in a NSF BI statement and to guide discussions:
http://coseenow.net/wizard/

Broader Impacts Guiding Principles and Questions for National Science Foundation Proposals:
https://www.researchinsociety.org/guiding-principles

Book: Broader Impacts of Science on Society
MacFadden, B.J. (2019) *Broader impacts of science on society.* Cambridge University Press

Making an Impact: Research Communication 101

Communication skills are central to sharing your work and engaging with communities in a meaningful way. Review these resource for a refresher on what makes research communication great.

AAAS Communication Toolkit:
https://www.aaas.org/resources/communication-toolkit

Introduction to STEM Communication, Office of STEM Education Partnerships, Northwestern University:
http://rsg.northwestern.edu

Working in Community: Building Partnerships and Using Needs Assessments

Building partnerships with communities is one of the best ways to create an impact. These resources from the Union of Concerned Scientists outline the background knowledge and tools required in partnership building.

Scientist-Community Partnerships: *A Scientist's Guide to Successful Collaboration*
https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2016/04/ucs-scientist-community-partnerships-2016.pdf

Worksheet: *Scoping, Building, and Evaluating Scientist-Community Partnerships*
https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2016/04/ucs-sci-comm-worksheet-2016.pdf

It can be tempting to think that we know what an audiences needs are, but the reality is, we don't usually have the complete picture. Conducting an audience needs assessment is an excellent way to build understanding

Community Tool Box: *Assessing Community Needs and Resources*
https://ctb.ku.edu/en/assessing-community-needs-and-resources

Inspiration

There are so many different ways to do public engagement. Here's a collection of success stories, innovative long-term projects, and organizations engaged in this work.

Meadow Watch: http://www.meadowatch.org/about.html

Teen Science Cafe: https://teensciencecafe.org/

National Informal STEM Education Network (NISE Net):
https://www.nisenet.org/about

The Center for Advancement of Informal Science Education:
https://www.informalscience.org/

Portal to the Public: https://popnet.instituteforlearninginnovation.org/

RockEdu Inclusive Science Outreach: https://rockedu.rockefeller.edu/outreach/

I-LABS Outreach and Education Resource Library: modules.ilabs.uw.edu/

Building a Logic Model

Building a logic model by considering inputs, outcomes and impact, supports the development of a successful project. Here are a few resources to get started:

InformalScience.org: *A Start To Developing a Logic Model*
https://www.informalscience.org/news-views/start-developing-logic-model

Community Tool Box: *Developing a Logic Model or Theory of Change*
https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/overview/models-for-community-health-and-development/logic-model-development/main

Sharing Your Work

Communicating about your engagement work is just as important as communicating about your research. Here are some resources for crafting a message and using social media:

COMPASS Message Box Workbook:
https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/e58a91_38af1e6731ab4b6bb6090fecc9bd4897.pdf

Michigan Tech's Field Guide to Social Media:
https://www.mtu.edu/umc/resources/social-media/fieldguide.pdf

#SciFund Challenge's Self-guided classes in social media, putting audiences first, and video storytelling:
https://scifundchallenge.org/scifund-classes/

Getting Feedback

Collecting feedback is a key. If you are interested creating an evaluation plan, this roundup of resources is a great place to start.

InformalScience.org: *Design Evaluation*
https://www.informalscience.org/what-evaluation-0