



ENGAGEMENT PATHS

Individually, take a few minutes to review the following two descriptions of engagement. The first column describes how most people move from thinking about a public issue to taking action. The second column describes how many organizations approach engaging members of the community in public issues.

How People Engage	How Organizations Engage
<p>Personal Realm People are living their daily private lives. Conversations tend to focus on concerns that have a direct impact on their own lives or the lives of those close to them. They talk to people they know and are comfortable with.</p> <p>Nascent Talk People begin to connect personal and public lives. This step looks like discussions we have with people every day, a mixture of gossip and conversation about an issue. People are not usually motivated to solve problems or make decisions.</p> <p>Discovery People cross over from thinking about issues in a private sense to thinking in public terms. They gain a sense of possibility and begin to see that common ground for action might be found. They become vested in finding a solution while working with others.</p> <p>Deliberation People make choices, wrestle with values and trade-offs, and figure out what to do in the context of their aspirations. This step is a prerequisite to taking purposeful public action.</p> <p>Complementary Action A wide range of individuals and organizations take action, informed by deliberation. The actions are typically not coordinated, but are carried out with a shared sense of purpose.</p>	<p>Research and Assessments The organization determines community needs, often so it can tailor an already existing service or program to fit into the community. This often takes the form of surveys, interviews, focus groups and in some cases conversations.</p> <p>Educate Community The organization provides people in the community with information, typically about a specific topic, issue, or program, to help people understand what the organization knows and embrace the organization's conclusions.</p> <p>Implementation Planning The organization convenes people to make decisions about strategies and action plans and assigns responsibilities for program implementation. The method of planning often includes community leaders, service providers, and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Collaboration To reduce duplication of efforts and leverage scarce resources, the organization seeks to coordinate its efforts in the community with groups working on similar issues. Organizations are asked to make agreements about how to collaborate. Often, agreements must be revisited if the players change.</p>



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At your table, discuss the following questions:

How do you describe the way you currently engage the community? Is the answer the same or different for your library?

What are the implications for the way you engage the community?

What it would take to shift to engagement that is more aligned with how people naturally engage in public issues?

Source: "The Organization-First Approach: How Programs Crowd Out Community" by John Creighton and Richard C. Harwood.
Download at <http://kettering.org/wp-content/uploads/OrganizationFirstApproach.pdf>.



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