The Michigan Public Engagement Framework

The Michigan Public Engagement Framework (MPEF) is a descriptive framework that explains public engagement in higher education at a systems-level.The MPEF focuses on three areas of public engagement: stakeholders, relationships, and domains. For the purposes of this framework, we define 'public engagement' broadly as:

the intentional and mutually beneficial interaction between members of an institution and external individuals or groups that results in positive societal change



Stakeholders

Stakeholders are individuals or groups of individuals from both institutional and public spaces. At a minimum, there are always two stakeholders in an engaged relationship (an institutional stakeholder and a public stakeholder).

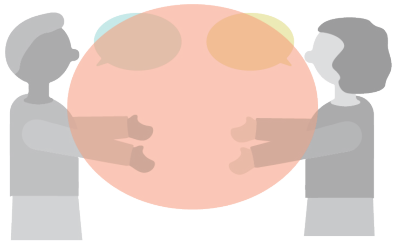
Each stakeholder has distinct and individual characteristics that shape the outcome of the engagement.

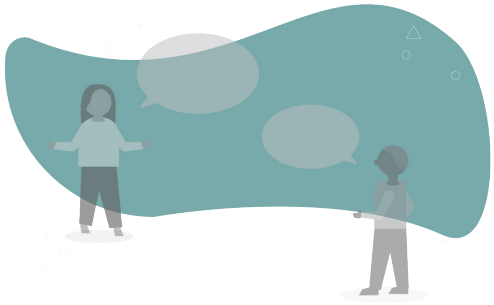
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Relationships

The **relationship** refers to the connection, interaction, collaboration, or partnership that the institutional and public stakeholders form during engagement.

These relationships themselves have distinct characteristics that are either actively negotiated or indirectly fashioned among the stakeholders. These relational characteristics also shape the engagement outcome.





Domains

The **domain** refers to the larger context or environment in which the engagement is taking place. These domains have distinct affordances, social practices, norms, and expectations that govern behavior in each space.

The people and relationships in an engagement operate within this broader context, and contextual factors further shape an engagement outcome.

Because public engagement outcomes are shaped by each of these dimensions individually and in concert, it is important to name and account for all characteristics relating to each dimension.

Stakeholders: Public engagement fundamentally begins with people.

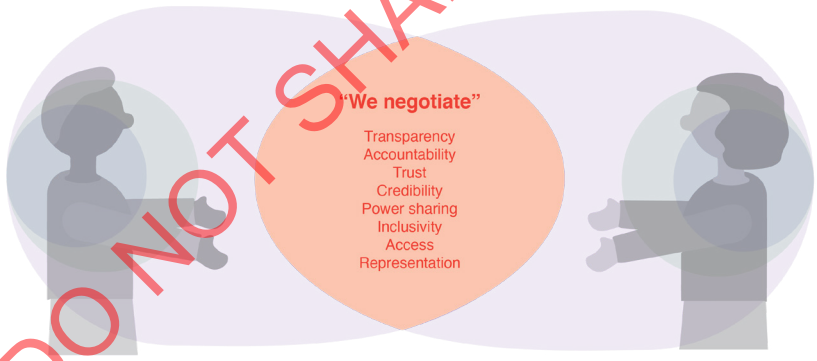
Stakeholders are individuals or groups of individuals from both institutional and public spaces. At a minimum, there are always two stakeholders in an engaged relationship: an institutional stakeholder, such as faculty or staff, and a public stakeholder, such as community partners, audiences, or policy-makers.



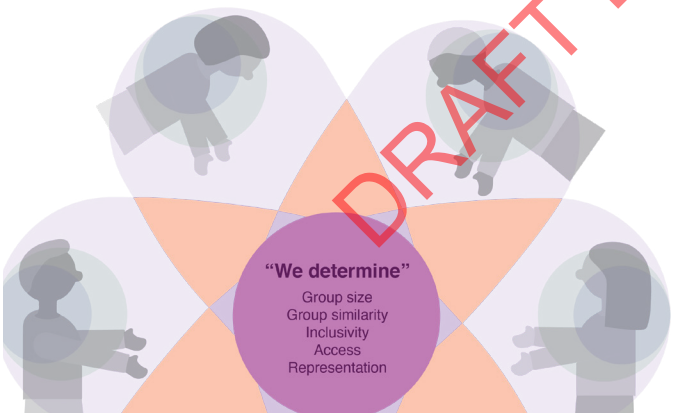
Every stakeholder comes to an engaged relationship with different identities, understandings, assets, and liabilities that influence their behaviors and actions in an engaged relationship. The characteristics of identity, understanding, assets, and liabilities are intricately connected with one another and build upon one another, as represented in the framework by the concentric circles that grow around an individual as each category is added.

Relationships: In public engagement, people form relationships with one another.

The Relationships dimension refers to the connections, interactions, collaborations, or partnerships that the institutional and public stakeholders form, ranging from 30-second interactions during a museum visit to a decades-long research partnership. The qualities of a relationship such as accountability, trust, and inclusivity, are always present in a relationship whether or not they are actively fostered by the stakeholders. At the same time, these qualities will manifest differently according to a relationship's context.



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When there are larger groups of stakeholders coming together in an engagement, the complexity of the relationship dimension increases. Additional factors such as size and similarity of the group (including who is not included in the group) affect the outcomes of public engagement. In addition, inclusivity, access, and representation take on additional meanings than in relationships involving small numbers of stakeholders.

Domains: The relationships that people form in public engagement occur in different contexts.

The Domains dimension refers to the various contexts of public engagement, including the different types of who, what, where, when, and why of engagement activities—from engagement with media professionals to community-engaged coursework. Domains have different norms, goals, approaches, practices, opportunities, pitfalls, and impacts. At the same time, domains are flexible, and the boundaries that separate them are rather permeable. Often any one specific engagement activity can fit in multiple domains. Despite their differences, domains do share many commonalities, and characteristics such as temporality, locality, and formality apply across domains.

We have identified twelve domains of public engagement reflecting current practices and professional communities.

Alternative, Informal, and Lifelong Learning



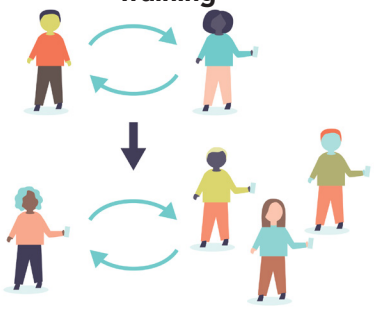
connecting with free-choice learners of all ages in nontraditional educational settings

Applied Practice and Professional Consulting



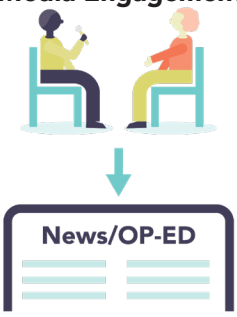
offering professional services, often on a pro-bono basis or in an educational context

Capacity-Building and Training



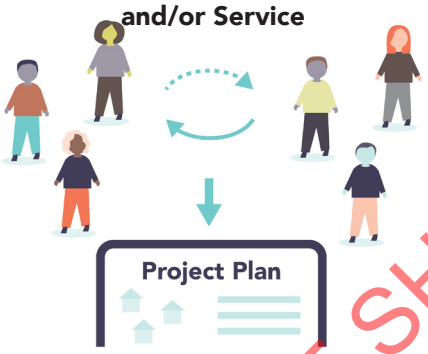
training and enabling stakeholders or building resources such as support, funding, or infrastructure

Communications and Media Engagement



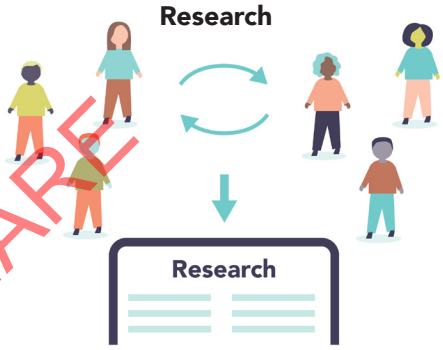
sharing research-related information in various forms

Community-Engaged Learning and/or Service



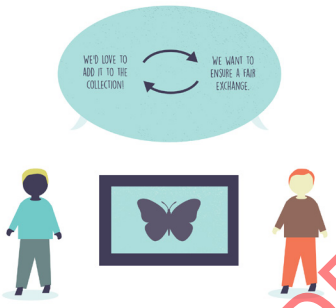
partnering through academic courses, co-curriculars, or volunteer programs to address community-identified needs

Community-Engaged Research



partnering through research projects to advance scholarship and address community-identified needs

Holdings and Collections



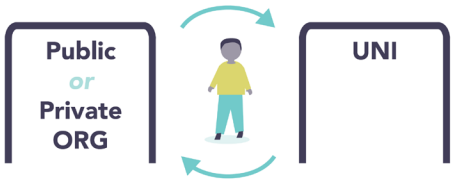
acquiring, negotiating, and sharing assets held by the university

Industry Partnerships, Commercialization, Entrepreneurship



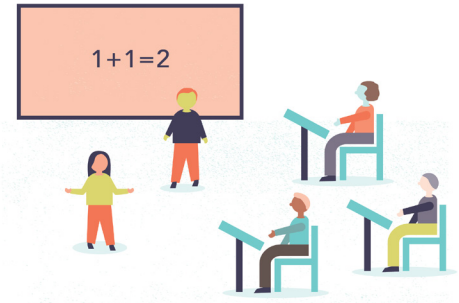
connecting with industry or private-sector entities to advance product and service innovations

Internships and Residency Programs



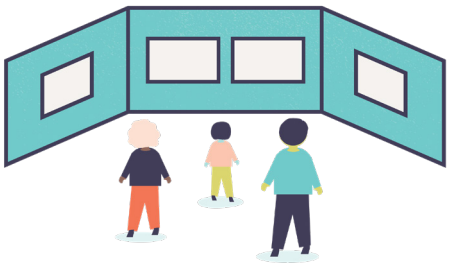
embedding individuals within an organization for the exchange of learning and work

P-14 Education and Educational Outreach



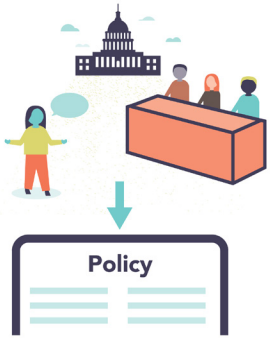
connecting with youth and other stakeholders in the P-14 educational system

Performance, Exhibition, and Installation



creating spaces, experiences, or artistic works open to publics

Policy, Advocacy, and Government Relations



engaging with decision-makers and/or stakeholders at all levels of government in order to

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Aurbach, E.L., Kuhn, E., Sdvizhkov, H., & Niemer, R.K. (2020)
"The Michigan Public Engagement Framework - version 4.0."

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