



Defining Community Engagement and Engaged Scholarship in the Office of Outreach and Engagement at The Ohio State University

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As a land grant institution, robust community engagement is essential to the work of the university's faculty, staff, and students. Ohio State is dedicated to extending teaching, learning, research, and creative expression beyond our campuses by engaging in partnership with communities - elevating the quality of life for the people of Ohio and beyond. In the Office of Outreach and Engagement, community engagement is defined in alignment with the Carnegie Foundation's definition.

“Community engagement describes collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. The purpose of community engagement is the partnership of college and university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good.”

The Office of Outreach and Engagement supports high impact engagement with our external communities. We further define high impact engagement as engagement activity that aligns with the following principles and outcomes.¹

- **Robust Reciprocity**: Engagement activities that are bidirectional, with the community contributing to as well as benefiting from the project.
- **Training Students**: Engagement activities that enhance the ability of our students to assume future positions of leadership in the context of community engagement.
- **Community Improvement**: Engagement activities whose primary goal is to improve community processes, conditions our outcomes or seek to address challenges identified by community members.
- **Programmatic Sustainability**: Engagement activities are designed with an emphasis on long-term sustainability. Projects should consider long term needs for funding and leadership to continue, sustain, or expand activities in collaboration with community partners. Projects that are not intended for long term sustainability, should be clearly articulated to community partners.
- **Community Capacity Building**: Engagement should seek to increase the capacity of individuals and organizations in the community to act or advocate to meet community needs.

¹ Our principles and outcomes of high impact engagement were informed by the University of South Florida's "Characteristics of high impact engaged scholarship" and prioritized through stakeholder engagement with faculty and university leadership at Ohio State. Our work was also inspired by "Why Community Engaged Scholarship Needs a Clear Definition" by John Saltmarsh, Gene Corbin and Prahdeep Singh Kehal (2021).



- Proactive, Respectful & Culturally Competent Engagement: High impact engagement requires proactive engagement that is centered on “meeting the community where they are.” Proactive engagement requires faculty, staff and students to seek to lower barriers to engagement for community partners. Engaged faculty, staff and students should be culturally competent and aware of community context and history.

Defining Community:

We define public and community, broadly, with an emphasis on individuals, organizations and institutions in communities near our various campuses and throughout the State of Ohio. Our definition of public is informed by Academy of Community Engagement Scholarship, as described below.

“The word “public” in higher education public engagement is typically used to refer to any entity, group, place, or space situated outside of the academy. Contrary to what it connotes, the term does not apply to only those entities that are typically considered in the public domain (i.e., governmental agencies, schools, neighborhood associations, etc.) ...From the academy’s perspective, public work refers to activities that members of the university conduct for the consumption and benefit of stakeholders situated outside of the academy. Implicit in this approach is the principle of conducting academic work that has resonance, benefit, and value to external audiences and the greater society” (Blanchard & Furco, 2021, pg. 27).²

Engagement can also be national and global in scope. In the Office of Outreach and Engagement, we place additional focus on engagement that involves community-based organizations, non-profit organizations or public sector organizations. Community partners may vary in scale from small non-profit or civic associations to large institutional partners, such as K-12 educational systems. Community also refers to the broader public in public engagement activities.

Emphasis on Service, Teaching & Learning and Research/Creative Activities:

Ohio State’s engagement with external communities is applied in three domains: service, teaching & learning and research or creative expression.³

- **Community Engaged Service**: Engaged service is associated with the use of university expertise to address specific issues (ad hoc or long-term) identified by individuals, organizations, or communities. This type of engagement is not primarily driven by a research question, though a research question may be of secondary interest in the activity.
- **Community Engaged Teaching & Learning**: Engaged teaching is organized around sharing knowledge with various audiences through either formal or informal arrangements. Types of engaged teaching vary by relationship amount the teacher, the learner, and the learning context. Engaged teaching may be for-credit or not-for-credit, guided by a teacher or self-directed.

² [General | Faculty Engaged Scholarship: Setting Standards and Building Conceptual Clarity | ID: kd17d292p | Carolina Digital Repository \(unc.edu\)](#)

³ Doberneck, D. M., Glass, C. R., & Schweitzer, J. (2010). From rhetoric to reality: A typology of publicly engaged scholarship. *Journal of higher education outreach and engagement*, 14(4), 5-35.

- **Community Engaged Research or Creative Expression:** Engaged research and creative activities are associated with the discovery of new knowledge, the development of new insights, and the creation of new artistic or literary performances and expressions – in collaboration with community partners.

Community engagement may focus solely on one domain or support an integrated approach, aligning service, teaching and/or research in a more long-term engagement process with communities. Engaged scholarship in one domain (such as research) could also reinforce future engagement in another domain (e.g. teaching and learning).⁴

Continuum of Community Engagement:

The intensity of activities in community engaged service, teaching and scholarship exist along a continuum, based on the degree of collaboration, co-development or co-design occur with community partners. Although co-design or co-creation provides the greatest degree of community ownership of engaged scholarship, less intensive forms of engagement (such as providing technical information or consultation to meet a community need), can be beneficial and build a foundation of trust with community partners. Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the type of activities represented along the continuum of engaged scholarship.

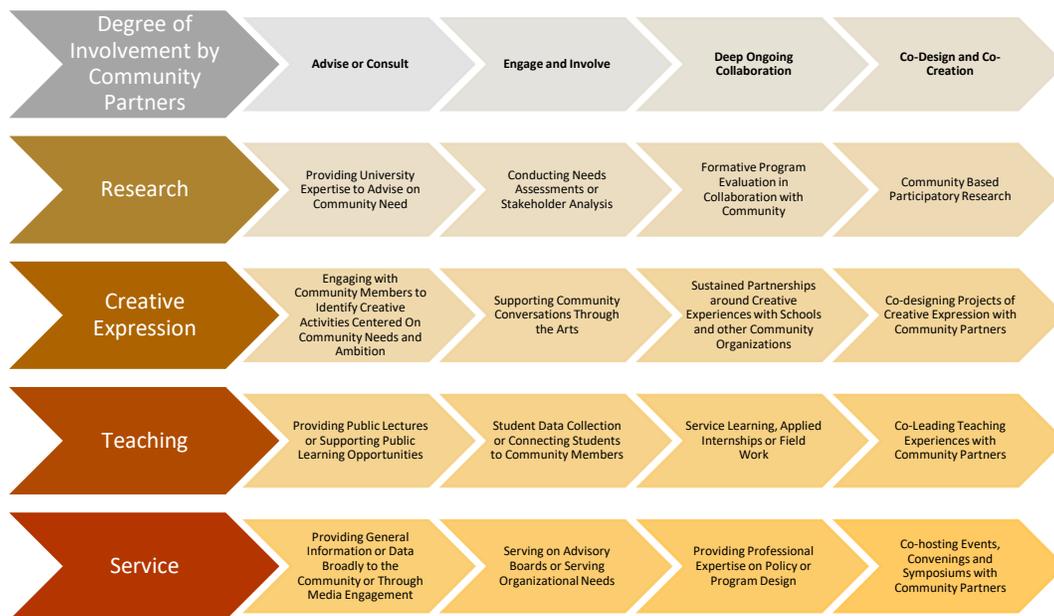


Figure 1: The Continuum of Engaged Scholarship in Research, Teaching and Service

⁴ Saltmarsh, J. Corbin, G. & Kehal, P. (2021). How Community Engaged Scholarship Improves Teaching and Learning. Scholars Strategy Network.



Community Perspectives on Effective Engaged Scholarship:

The Office of Outreach and Engagement and OSU faculty conducted research in 2020 and 2021 with community stakeholders in neighborhoods throughout Franklin County to better understand community perspectives on engagement and collaboration with the university.⁵ Stakeholders voiced a strong desire for OSU to be part of meaningful, transformative community change through impactful engaged scholarship. Community stakeholders were very clear in articulating the characteristics of highly effective engaged scholarship in their community. We encourage engaged scholarship which adheres to these desired goals and practices expressed by community stakeholders.

- Reciprocal engagement processes with honest, open, respectful, consistent and accessible communication.
- Engaged scholarship that supports needed applied research to evaluate programs and policies in collaboration with community or guided by community leaders.
- Engaged scholarship that supports research that could contribute to direct program or policy change for community improvement.
- Avoiding traditional research design that treats community members and partners as subjects of a study, often disregarding their perspectives and leaves participants feeling used, exhausted, and distrustful.
- Committing to mutuality in all aspects of research development and design, which requires early engagement with community partners in research design.

⁵ Clark, J. Kaiser, M. Reece J. & Schmiesing, R. (2022). University research in the neighborhood: The perspective of community members. The Office of Outreach and Engagement. Summary accessible online at: <https://engage.osu.edu/university-research-neighborhood>