

Working Definitions

Dispute Resolution Institute

Follow this and additional works at: http://open.mitchellhamline.edu/dri_symposia

Dispute Resolution Institute, "Working Definitions" (March 28, 2016). *DRI Symposia*. Paper 1.
http://open.mitchellhamline.edu/dri_symposia/2015/pre_symposium_information/1

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the DRI Projects at Mitchell Hamline Open Access. It has been accepted for inclusion in DRI Symposia by an authorized administrator of Mitchell Hamline Open Access. For more information, please contact sean.felhofer@mitchellhamline.edu.



AN INTENTIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT
Public Engagement and Decision-Making:
Moving from Dysfunction and Polarization to Dialogue and Understanding

Working Definitions

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A process that brings people together to address issues of common importance, to solve shared problems, and to bring about positive social change. Effective **public engagement** invites average citizens to get involved in deliberation, dialogue and action on **public** issues that they care about. And, it helps leaders and decision makers better understand the perspectives, opinions, and concerns of citizens and stakeholders.

When done well, public engagement goes far beyond the usual suspects to include those members of the community whose voices have traditionally been left out of political and policy debates. Moreover it:

- helps people weigh a variety of perspectives and listen to each other's views;
- builds common understanding, manages differences and establishes direction for moving ahead on tough issues;
- builds trust and improves communication between the public and leaders;
- creates new opportunities for citizens to become involved in public problem solving and decision making. *Intellitics*

Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of [higher education and research] can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit. National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

Public engagement is the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity... prepare educated, engaged citizens, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good. *University of Minnesota*

Public engagement is a new way of thinking about how governments, communities and ordinary citizens can work together to achieve complex, societal goals. Canada's Public Policy Forum

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

Leaders engaging with all sectors—public, private, non-profit, citizens, and others—to develop effective, lasting solutions to public problems that go beyond what any sector could achieve on its own.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – Individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.... A morally and civically responsible individual recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and therefore considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own; such an individual is willing to see the moral and civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed moral and civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate.

Civic Responsibility and Higher Education, edited by Thomas Ehrlich, Oryx Press, 2000

Civic engagement is the participation of private actors in the public sphere, conducted through direct and indirect interactions of civil society organizations and citizens-at-large with government, multilateral institutions and business establishments to influence decision making or pursue common goals. –[The World Bank](#)

Our mission is to educate and empower people to engage in hands-on democracy in order to individually and collectively take strategic actions to identify and address the root causes of local, state, federal, and global issues of social and economic injustice and concerns. – Occupy Los Angeles, "[Civic Engagement](#)" website

Engagement, then, is not merely a matter of being active, of deploying the rhetorical and cognitive skills necessary to make your case and press your point. To engage with others requires that we hear what they have to say, that we make space in our interaction for them to respond fully and genuinely, and that we are fully responsive to their responses and proposals." – Anthony Simon Laden, "Taking the engagement in civic engagement seriously"

"Active citizens seek to build, sustain, reform, and improve the communities to which they belong, which range from small voluntary associations to the world. Active citizens deliberate with peers to define public problems and then collaborate with peers to address those problems. In doing so, they honor certain virtues, such as equal respect for others and a degree of loyalty to their communities that does not preclude critical thinking and dissent. Collaboration—actual work—is just as important as deliberation. People who merely talk about public issues are ineffectual and often naïve or misinformed; we learn from acting together. By collaborating, citizens construct or build public goods: tangible goods like schools and

markets, and intangible ones like traditions and norms. In doing so, they create civic relationships, which are scarce but renewable assets for civil society.” – Peter Levine (drawing from recent testimony to the National Academy of Sciences’ Committee on Science, Technology, and Law)

In American history, the citizen has been not only a voter or a rights-bearing member of the nation or a consumer of services. The citizen has also been a producer, a public-spirited agent in problem solving and common work. ... Addressing the tough challenges we face today will require people to reconceive of themselves as citizens. ... It will require widespread civic involvement that taps the common sense, energy, insight, and effort that comes from citizens with different talents and points of view working together, often across lines of sharp cultural, partisan, racial, and economic differences. Without active citizenship, we will continue to struggle with narrow, unfulfilling roles and ineffective institutions. With restored citizenship, we act as co-creators of history, reclaiming our birthright as democratic citizens to be full participants in shaping our common life. – The staff and partners of the [*Center for Democracy and Citizenship*](#)

“A morally and civically responsible individual recognizes himself or herself as a member of a larger social fabric and therefore considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own; such an individual is willing to see the moral and civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed moral and civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate.” –Anne Colby and Thomas Ehrlich, introduction, to *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, edited by Thomas Ehrlich (Oryx Press, 2000)