

What is engagement and why engage people?

In this module, you will be doing a lot of work brainstorming and posting your thoughts online, so the sooner you respond to the questions and prompts below, the better your online discussion will be. Not surprisingly, the module on what engagement is and why we want to engage people will require you to be fully engaged!

Learning Activity:

- Go on-line and find an example of an issue or project that people are engaging in in YOUR community. Post a short reflection on the article that addresses some of these questions-
 - Who is involved and what is their role?
 - How and why did they get involved?
 - Are they leaders or followers?
 - What are people doing to help?
 - Do you think they are making a difference? Why or why not?

Learning Activity- week 1 (Note- this activity will span two weeks of course time)

- Small group brainstorm on community engagement
 - In the Forum for this topic and this activity, post your responses to the following questions. Don't repeat answers, but add on to what other groups have contributed. This may take a few days as others respond to your thoughts.
 - What is community engagement? 1-3 words
 - Who is already involved in water protection in your community?
 - Side Bar: How are they engaged?
 - Who else should be involved? Who is missing?
 - What specific actions should/can people take to protect water?

Learning Activity- week 2

After you have posted your thoughts on a community project in YOUR community that has engaged people, and your thoughts on the questions in the **week 1** activity, look back through the postings and see if you can discover patterns that help you answer the following questions:

- What words stand out? What themes or connections do you see?
- Who is not engaged and why not?
- What specific actions can people take to protect water?
- Actions and barriers to action.

- Try to be as specific as possible so you can help people identify the barriers that prevent them from taking action. Below are actions and barriers identified in a previous Master Water Steward workshop:
 - Action: Infiltrate at the source; Possible barriers: Unfamiliar terminology and associated actions, action is not specific enough
 - Action: Private property dispute; Possible barriers: External issue that may not be able to be addressed
 - Action: Interact with water; Possible barriers: Fear, lack of experience, lack of skill
 - Action: Clean up street gutters; Possible barriers: Not my responsibility, time, dangerous, too visible
 - Action: Conserve water; Possible barriers: Don't believe it is a problem, their action won't make a difference, change is hard

Motivating Engagement

We all have good intentions but they don't always translate to action. **Barriers** are a common and natural occurrence. Experiential education, or learning by doing, is a great way to help people identify and break down their barriers to action. The [Association for Experiential Education](#) regards experiential education as "a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities."

There are barriers that keep us from engaging at all and a whole other set of barriers that keep us from acting on that engagement. The strategies described in this workshop will help you address both types of barriers.

Learning Activity:

Clarifying actions and identifying barriers to action

Using the list of actions you came up with in the forum, clarify the actions people can take to protect water and brainstorm barriers people may experience or perceive to taking those actions. Actions must be specific and clear for people to understand. Post your answers on the discussion board and look at what others have contributed.