

EDUCATION ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

BEST PRACTICES REVIEW SERIES

Topic: Designing Inclusive Experiences

Best Practice: Effective programs are designed inclusively.

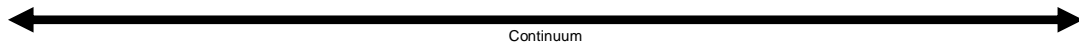
Use the continuums in the following diagram (“Perceptions of the Role of EE&I”) to place where you believe your organization/programming is at the moment, then place where you would like it to be. Involving the community in your program design process can allow you to reach more people, especially those demographic groups currently underrepresented. As well, an inclusive design process can be a key component in the overall effectiveness of your programming. Constituents often have great ideas that the organization hasn’t thought of, particularly when the board and staff are not yet very diverse. These ideas often are relevant, pertinent, and compelling, because they emerge through a process that meets the needs of the community and the organization.

Perceptions of the Role of EE&I

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS OUTSIDE OF MY ORGANIZATION

I consider myself a service provider to my community

I consider myself a co-decision maker with others in my community



WAYS TO INFLUENCE OTHERS

My role is to provide objective information.

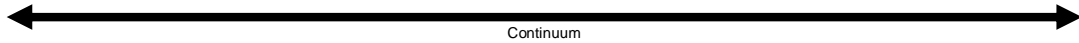
My role is to actively discuss values, perspectives, and underlying issues in order to encourage informed decisions.



FOCUS

I feel most effective when I focus on our vision and coordinate with like-minded organizations.

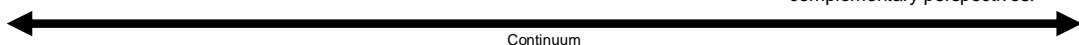
I feel most effective when I work with diverse organizations to construct a common vision.



DESIGN

My organization's program center on environmental concepts and issues that are generally designed from a universal or one size fits all model.

My organization's programs work at systemic levels of change that may not always appear as environmentally driven because it considers that the environment is part of a larger issue that involves various members of the community with equally valid and complementary perspectives.



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A current goal for many environmental educators and interpreters is to reach out to diverse communities that are using natural places. But accomplishing this can be a daunting task.

These five steps have been identified to develop and expand outreach activities:

1. Establish goals -- what it is you want to accomplish. If you have not had much interaction to date with the communities you wish to target, it will take time to figure out the right balance of activities with which to foster trust and build relationships. It may take several years of consistent, frequent, and visible outreach to achieve the results you seek.
2. Understand your audiences
 - a. Define your audience as specifically as possible.
 - b. Match your outreach activities as closely as possible with your audiences' interests and ability to hear your message.
 - c. Avoid making assumptions. You may believe at the outset that a behavior is common to all members of a particular group, only to find that many members of the community don't embrace that behavior at all.
 - d. Important information to know for each audience includes the following:
 - What motivates this audience to take action?
 - Whom do they trust as suppliers of information?
 - Where do they get information? (church, media, community, etc.)
 - How do they get information? What types of media do they trust?
 - What languages do audience members speak?
 - Are there images, icons, or messages that either connect with or offend this audience?
 - Are there key opinion leaders within this audience who would be willing to speak on your behalf?
3. Develop Strategies
 - a. Tailor marketing and community relations strategies to the needs of your audiences as you have come to understand them.
 - b. Potential strategies include:
 - Target ethnic news and media outlets and journals for advertising, and tailor your advertising to the interest and cultural views of readers, viewers, or listeners.
 - Create leaflets and flyers specifically tailored to diverse communities.
 - Use community outlets to distribute materials (churches, libraries, community centers).
 - Produce materials in appropriate languages.
 - Hire marketing or communications professionals who have specific expertise in reaching your target audience.
 - Create materials that tell stories about members of the target audience who have already connected with your organization.
 - Hold outreach meetings in locations that are convenient and comfortable for your target audience.
4. Define Objectives -- your objectives help you define success. The best marketing or outreach objective is measurable and can be tracked back to the strategy that led to defining that objective.

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5. Evaluate Success

- a. It is important that you build methods for assessing the success of your strategies into any marketing and community relations plan, but it is especially important when you are reaching out to new audiences. Whatever assessment tool you use should incorporate feedback loops that give you honest information about how your audiences are responding to your activities.
- b. Some examples of assessments include:
 - Build a dedicated web page with its own URL for a specific outreach strategy and track visits to that web page.
 - Use web-based surveys conducted via e-mail.
 - Provide a postcard response device in printed materials that asks for feedback.
 - Conduct random phone surveys of audience members, tailored to their needs and to the concerns of your organization.
 - Have board members make “thank you” calls to the members of a specific audience, using a script of questions that ask for feedback.
 - Find two or three key contacts in the target audience whom you can trust to give you clear and accurate feedback.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Nonprofit Organizations (2005, Katherine Pease et al, the Denver Foundation) includes modules on creating inclusive committees, gathering information, completing and implementing an inclusiveness action plan, and programs and constituents.

The North American Association for Environmental Education and the Environmental Education Training Partnership (<http://www.naaee.org/programs-and-initiatives/diversity/cultural-diversity-eetap/>) has a variety of resources for fostering perspectives and approaches that will enable EE&I to remain effective and relevant to diverse populations.

