

# **Building Institutional Capacity for Public Engagement with Science**

**Webinar**

**August 28, 2025  
2:00pm –3:30pm (ET)**

**Standing Committee on Advancing Science Communication  
Board on Science Education  
Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education**

# Today's Presenters

Moderated by:



**Elyse Aurbach**  
*Michigan State University  
(Committee Member)*



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*American Geophysical  
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*SOVA Solutions*



# Insights from *Building Institutional Capacity for Engaged Research: Proceedings of a Workshop*

*Susan Renoe, University of Missouri*

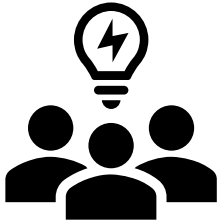
*Chair, Workshop Planning Committee*

## **Thank you to the sponsors of the June 2024 workshop:**

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# Rationale for the Workshop



## **Today's challenges call for more collaborative approaches to research and public engagement**

- The complex challenges facing society today call for bringing researchers, policy makers, community leaders and members, industry stakeholders, and others together to accomplish shared goals.

## **Innovations are already happening to build capacity and the evidence base**

- Many research leaders — from universities and other research institutions, communities, funding agencies, philanthropic organizations, publishing, and academic professional societies are building the capacities to support engaged research and other forms of engagement.

The workshop provided an opportunity to engage a broad group of these leaders to explore opportunities and generate concrete ideas for building capacity for engaged research.

# Approach to the Workshop

- Centering the needs of communities, other partners, and society and opportunities for mutual benefits
- Focusing on systems versus individual approaches to building capacity
- Learning from evidence-based “bright spots” where capacity building is already happening
- Engaging participants in generating concrete ideas for adoptable innovations and opportunities for coordination

# A Systems Approach: Identifying Actions at Three Levels of Scale

*Scan of Promising  
Efforts to Broaden  
Faculty Reward Systems  
to Support Societally-  
Impactful Research*



A synthesis of two complementary landscape scans identified opportunities for capacity-building actions at the individual level, the research institution level, and the meta-network level

- **Individual** – Equip research and community partners with the skills, resources, and knowledge bases to engage ethically, effectively, and equitably
- **Institution** – Organize research institutions to create facilitative, supportive environments
- **Meta-network** – Energize the meta-network to shape the broader disciplinary and funding ecosystems to prioritize and support societally-impactful research



# Bright Spots: Building Capacity within Research Institutions

## Centering relationship-building and shared governance

**Example: Morehouse School of Medicine** developed a comprehensive philosophy and approach to engaging communities and **created a community governance board** with bylaws and rules of engagement ensuring community members' involvement in all pillars of the institution, including serving on the board of trustees and institutional review boards.

## Establishing a cabinet-level role to coordinate partnerships and engagement across all parts of the institution

**Example: Brown University** created a leadership position to advance mutuality and positive impact for community engagement efforts across every aspect of the institution.

## Equipping staff and updating policies and practices

**Example: The University of Pittsburgh's** efforts have focused on developing support infrastructure responsive to the institution's place-based legacies and obligations, thereby enhancing both the university's societal impact. As part of this work, they have developed a **competency framework for community engagement professionals** and worked to put in place supportive policies and practices.



# Key Themes: Incentives and Metrics

- Expanding beyond traditional metrics of success for faculty, projects, and institutions
- Considering the unique roles that professional organizations can play
- Funding approaches that support flexibility and long-term relationship-building

# Key Areas for Capacity Building

- Equipping individuals and partners for positive engagement
- Making changes within institutions to build supportive cultures and practices
- New metrics, incentives, and approaches to funding for sustainability