



EPICS in IEEE Community Partner Training and Best Practices



Why EPICS in IEEE requires a Community Partner:

Stakeholder input is invaluable in solving community challenges

- Students consider the end users' input from the start when developing the solution.
- Students gain a better understanding of the community needs.
- Community partnership helps students develop empathy in service-learning.
- Partners can offer support such as volunteers and support staff in project implementation.
- Partners help to deploy the project into the community and provide maintenance point of contact and support.
- Partners can acquire additional funding for the additional project deployments.
- Students become connected with community to conduct training and outreach programs.

Service Learning:

“A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.”

- National Service Learning Clearinghouse

How to Find a Community Partner:

- Think about the end users of your product- what organizations support those individuals?
- Find an organization whose mission matches your project goal or is already working to try to solve the goal from a non-technical perspective.
- Ask community organizations if they need any technological support to solve any challenges- they might propose the problem that matters most to your desired community.
- Find local community partners for successful project deployment- where is the physical site you want to deploy on? Are they involved from the start?



How to Approach a Community Partner:




- Contact them through email, phone or at a community event highlighting the goal of your project.
- Discuss with them the benefit and impact of the project on end users and the student team.
- Explain to them why you think it is important to solve the identified problem- do they agree?
- Discuss their roles and responsibility in the project.
- Ask for a collaboration letter for development, deployment, and maintenance of the project.

EPICS in IEEE Requirements:

- The team must secure a collaboration letter from the community partner.
- Choose a local community partner for better interactions and support.
- Provide a clear maintenance plan.
- Mention the roles and responsibilities of the community partner in the project.
- The community partner must be actively engaged in project execution.

A strong collaboration letter includes:

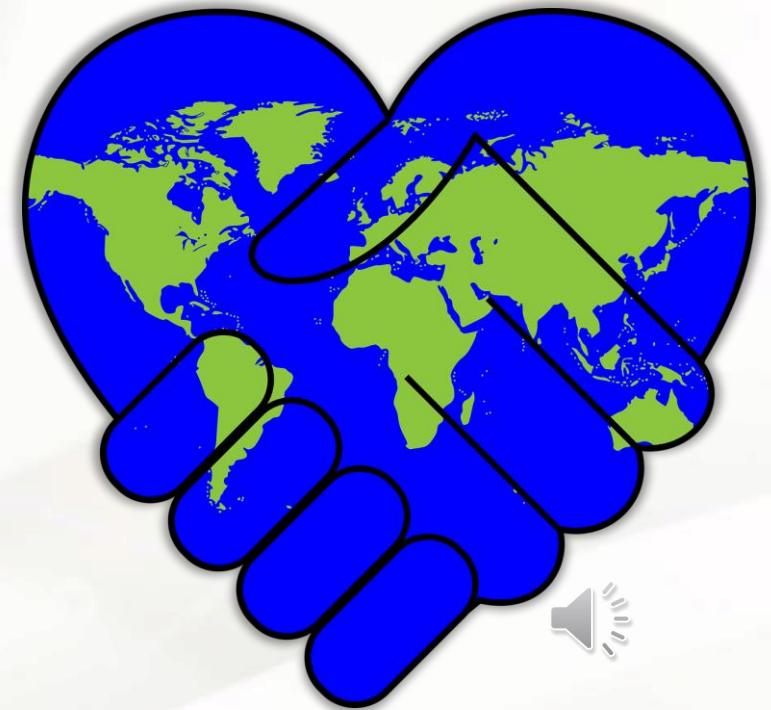
- Clear support of the scope of problem and proposed solution as necessary for their stakeholders
- Agreement to pilot, deploy, or use the solution with their stakeholders
- Discussion of long-term project maintenance (i.e. if the solution breaks, who is financially and technically responsible?)
- Details on any financial or in-kind contributions that the non-profit is providing the project
- Details provided on company letterhead with a signature, and includes the link to the website 

Who is Not an Appropriate Community Partner?

- Community partners who are not directly working with the end users of the proposed solution.
- Any subgroups from within your university (The partner must be an outside organization.)
- Any partner organization with a primary mission that does not align with your project goal.

In addition, the following cannot serve as community partner:

- Student clubs, even if service-oriented
- Incubation center or start-up organizations
- Rotary clubs, and others who have broad service goals only



Tips for Engaging with you Community Partner (CP)

Beginning of Project	Middle of Project	End of Project
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Confirm problem scope in your community where solution will be deployed● Ask CP to complete a pre-survey to gauge their status/condition/ability● Discuss with your CP the project objectives and proposed solution● Review the project requirements and intended outcomes of the project● Clarify communication plan to engage with CP and end users throughout the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Consider site visits to confirm design will be operational on-site with site requirements● Involve their volunteers and staff in the project● Schedule check in meetings with the partner● Reach out to end users as the design is progressing to get feedback from them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Train your community partner on usage and maintenance of the projects developed● Ask for support in project publicity and community engagement● Conduct collaborative outreach programs● Ask for the CP to complete the partner survey at end of project



Project Success Goals

- Ask the community partner to assist in determining project success goals
 - Identify desired successful deployment of the project before your start, and then have CP help determine if all requirements were met at end of project.
 - Measure the number of benefitted end users- usage rates, surveys, etc.
 - Is the CP willing to help collect project feedback from end-users to improve the product?



How to Evaluate the Relationship with the Community Partner

- Measure engagement of the Community Partner throughout the project
 - Number and timeliness of interactions when scoping the project requirements, and during design process
 - Effective engagement in the maintenance of the project
 - Regularity of communication during and after the project completion
- Send a survey to your community partner, or ask for their feedback about the partnership regularly



Strong Community Partner Examples

- National Association for the Blind – develop an assistive device for the blind
- Pollution control boards – Environment impact projects
- Human Services Campus -serves the homeless population of Phoenix
- Community Garden-example [Charles Nabrit Garden](#)

The community garden mentioned that, “the students asked permission to use the space, toured the space, respectfully used the space, and conducted some student engagement.”

One of the students on the project noted, “going out to the garden and talking with the community partners we have for this project I think is one of the ways I learned the most. It was beneficial to work closely with a community partner.”

“The ability for the clients of the Human Services Campus to have their own reusable bottles not only helps the environment – it also helps give clients a sense of ownership and belonging, It also allows for a level of independence and brings dignity to those who use their own bottle versus having to ask each time they need water.”

Krickette Wetherington, Project Manager at the Action Nexus at ASU Watts College of Public Service & Community Solution



Unsure about a community partner you have in mind?

Reach out to us!

Our committee can help discuss potential community partners and best practices!

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