Cambio

Bridge Building as Community-Centered Engagement

Building bridges can be a powerful metaphor for the work museums can do to engage with their communities. Thinking about different types of bridges, their purposes, and the materials and methods used to build them can help museum professionals to consider the processes, goals and outcomes of working together with communities so museums can become more inclusive places. This activity encourages museum teams to relate bridge-building processes to their community engagement strategies.

This brainstorming activity has served as a powerful metaphor for work with the community.

PREPARATION

Set-up: You may choose to use this digitally or print it.

Participants: We recommend doing this as a department or bringing together a cross-departmental, cross-functional group focused on engaging your communities. You could also consider completing it individually and then talking with a group about each of your perspectives.

Time: Be sure to give yourselves enough time to really talk about these different concepts and then place your organization on the balancing beam.

PROCESS

1. Begin the activity by watching this short video about a bridgemaking project undertaken by an Indigenous community in Peru.

2. After watching the video, take a look at these different images of bridges (linked here or below), considering these questions as you do so:
    - What types of bridges do you see here?
    - What are the purposes of the bridges?
    - What are the different elements or components of bridges and bridge building that make them successful?
    - What seems to make these different bridges work well?
    - What considerations need to be kept in mind when building a bridge (such as size, location, materials, purpose, attachments, etc)?

3. After looking at the images and brainstorming the bridge-building considerations, think about the different ways that your museum might be a bridge to your local Latinx communities.

4. Using bridge building as a metaphor, think about how your organization is focused on building bridges with your local community. What do you need to consider? How have you already been connecting with your Latinx communities? How can you strengthen those connections?

5.   Here are some things to keep in mind:
    ●   Bridges have to work in both directions.
    ●   What helps to strengthen a bridge?
    ●   What is the purpose of the bridge, and what considerations relate to that purpose?
    ●   Bridges are strong in part because of how they attach to the two pieces of land they connect

6. Use this exercise to help your organization craft a plan for reaching out to and building bridges with your local communities. Remember that your plan should be co-created with your community. Bridges aren't built only from one side of the river!

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Horton Mill Covered Bridge, Blount County, Alabama

Iowa River Bridge, Johnson County, Iowa

Cottonwood River Pratt Truss Bridge, Chase County, Kansas

Mt Zion Swinging Bridge, Lawrence County, Tennessee

Dodge Street Overpass Omaha, NE

Build An Arch exhibit, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, CA

For more resources on engaging with Latinx audiences, reconceptualizing STEM, or shifting organizational practices, go to CambioExperience.org/Resources