



The Center for
Nanotechnology in Society
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

Improving Community Development Project Outcomes

Engineers and scientists often want to use technology to improve living conditions in poor and developing communities. Unfortunately, while their intentions are good, the outcomes of their efforts often aren't. Solutions frequently fail, sometimes leaving communities worse off than before. The problem, however, often has little to do with technology but rather comes down to a lack of communication, empathy, and cultural understanding.

To address this disconnect, CNS-ASU developed and hosted two-day Community Engagement Workshops in four cities to help scientists and engineers understand the limits of their knowledge and the value of local expertise. Workshop organizers, together with local experts, community organizers, and nonprofits, used hands-on lessons to help participants 1) improve their listening and empathy skills; 2) recognize how to “de-center” technology as a solution; and 3) learn to partner with local people and organizations to increase their chances of having a sustained positive result in the communities they aim to help.

“Nano Around the World,” a card game developed by CNS and the Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network (NISE Net), is one of the hands-on activities that help participants understand how to assess the needs, values, goals, and aspirations of a community and anticipate the impact of technologies on it.



Four Community Engagement Workshops were held over the past year in 2014:

- March 20-21: Georgia Tech University
- April 8-11: University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Oct. 3-4: Concordia University, Montreal
- Nov. 21-22: Arizona State University

Dr. Jameson Wetmore works on understanding how people design technological systems and how those systems reinforce specific values. Along with **Dr. Susan Cozzens** at Georgia Tech, he co-leads Thematic Research Cluster (TRC 1) at CNS-ASU focused on equity and equality of nanotechnologies.



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