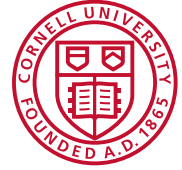


Cornell Cooperative Extension Cornell Garden-Based Learning



Qualities of an Active Contributor to a Peer Learning Network

Peer learning networks can best be described as a form of interdependent or mutual learning that involves the sharing of knowledge, ideas, and experience between members of a community (Boud 2001). The core of any successful peer-learning network begins with trust. There are various contexts in which peers are more likely to be listened to rather than professionals that are not associated with a peer group. For example, when members in a minority community are distrusting of outsiders who may represent past or present exploitations and misconducts (Community Tool Box 2016); or when language, shared experiences, and customs create barriers for non-members of that ethnic group. People that have had the same unique experience can more easily come together to share and yet reaching beyond can offer the necessary connect to make quality decisions.

Consider the following competencies for personal readiness and engagement with communities as you ensure that our Cooperative Extension master volunteer networks engages in a collaborative peer learning model.

Personal Readiness

Individuals within peer learning networks can address the tacit and dynamic aspects of knowledge creation and sharing, as well as the more explicit aspects. Peer learning network members will have the knowledge, skills and/or ability to:

- Understand how their viewpoints may impact and bias their work.
- Work with a variety of people including those of a different race, gender or ability.
- Identify environmental factors that can impact a person's growth and development.
- Identify factors in a person that can affect his/her growth and development.
- Understand how the availability of resources (social, financial and political) can affect a person's access to community support services.
- Identify the continued learning opportunities that they need.
- Maintain a high level of professionalism and ethics in their work.
- Understand the deeper issues of food insecurity and poverty.



Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

Engagement with the Community

Communities are not limited by formal structures: they create connections among people across organizational and geographic boundaries. Communities create a direct link between learning and performance, because the same people participate in communities of practice and in teams and business units. Peer learning networks enable community participants to take collective responsibility for managing the knowledge they need, recognizing that, given the proper structure, they are in the best position to do this. Peer learning network members will have the knowledge, skills and/or ability to:

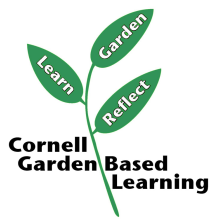
- Identify assets in the community.
- Build relationships in the community.
- Bring diverse stakeholders together to make complex decisions.
- Assess community change readiness and help track change in the community over time.
- Understand / appreciate cultural, religious, legal or other issues that may affect a program or the people it serves.
- Be invested in the goals and needs of the community.
- Access other programs in Cooperative Extension and organizations in the community that are working with low-income audiences, and build relationships with them.
- Recognize that relationships take time. Take time to know your peers, learn new things that are important to them.
- Stay flexible and open.

This has been adapted from CYFAR Core Competencies where priority skill areas have been identified for each core competency. Professional development resources to enhance each of the CYFAR Core Competencies can be found at <https://cyfar.org/>



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- Brack, A. B. et al. (2008) Are peer educators really peers? J Am Coll Health. 2008 Mar-Apr;56(5):566-8.
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