

## Networking Activities Toolkit

### Created by the Network Learning Exchange

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#### Why should I include networking activities in my agenda?

Networking activities have several benefits, including:

- Building trust in a group
- Facilitating deeper connections and greater awareness
- Reducing stress in social situations
- Bringing participants minds into the present moment
- Hearing more voices in a crowded room
- Creating shared understanding and visions among participants

#### Types of networking activities:

- Icebreakers (are generally at the beginning of events and relatively short)
  - Digital Icebreakers: In an email to the whole group before the meeting, send a picture of you doing something you love.
  - Word Cloud (digital or in person): list 3 words that describe you. Or, list 3 things you value. Or, list 2 things you hope to gain from the experience and 2 things you hope to give. These offerings could be generated into a word cloud.
- Ways to split into groups (help participants meet new people)
  - Stickers on Name Tags: all the blue dots gather, one of each color gather
  - Deck of Cards: all the Kings gather, all of the diamonds gather
  - Birth Month: join a group with others whose birth month is Jan - Mar, April - June, July - Sept, or Oct - Dec.
- Brainstorming (quick ways to generate ideas and glean a common vision)
  - Body-storming: The rule is you can't stop moving as you shout out ideas to be recorded by a scribe.
  - Reflect and Write: After introducing topic, allow 2-5 minutes for everyone to reflect quietly, then write as many responses as they can think of to the question posed; one idea per sticky note. Round Robin (one person at a time, with everyone getting a turn) to hear one idea, post on flip chart. Keep going until all ideas are heard.
- Team Building (help the group find common ground, build trust and explore ways to cooperate)
  - See following activity worksheet "Connecting through Areas of Focus or Interest"
  - See following activity worksheet "Let's Collaborate"
  - See following activity worksheet "Weaving Connections"

- Celebration (giving and receiving appreciation encourages further participation)
  - Peer Awards: participants draw a name and create a certificate/award/ribbon and present it at an awards ceremony. Could be silly or sincere.
  - Recognition Awards: Give Dollar Tree gifts that represent some quality or story of the person you're recognizing. (Ex: glow stick for the person/organization whose work lights up the community or hand clappers to 'give someone a clap on the back' for their hard work.)
  - Toast: participants with beverages and take turns toasting the group for their accomplishments.

## Networking Activity Worksheet

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Connecting through Areas of Focus or Interest</b>
<b>Length of Time</b>	40-45 minutes
<b>Materials Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Table or chairs to sit on so everyone can see and hear each other</li> <li>✓ Flip chart, easel, markers</li> <li>✓ Sticky notes with pre-marked 'cues': Challenges, Common Challenges, Opportunities to Work Together</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives and Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn more about who is in the room and what they are working on (networking / connecting)</li> <li>• Share challenges and strategies for addressing them</li> <li>• Discover opportunities to work with others on common areas of interest; potential to share resources and eliminate duplication of efforts</li> </ul>
<b>How many people/groups?</b>	<p>As many as 6-8 groups of 7-10 people, each group representing a different Area of Focus, such as:</p> <p>Arts and Culture  Economy and Business  Education and Youth  Health and Human Services  Natural World / Recreation  Public Safety / Government / Infrastructure</p>
<b>Steps</b>	<p>Invite participants to go the area of focus that most represents the work their organization does.</p> <p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ask for a volunteer scribe. Ask the scribe to write the names of café participants.</li> <li>✓ Prompt the group to respond to each question in order.</li> <li>✓ There will be sticky notes printed with the cafe questions to prompt participants, assist you in keeping everyone on task, and to help in transcribing the notes.</li> <li>✓ A timekeeper will announce when it is time to move to the next discussion question.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Each participant states name, organization and top two things they are working on. (8 min / ~1 min each)</li> <li>2. Briefly name a primary Challenge your organization is facing in this area of focus. (8 min / ~ 1 min each)</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Based on what you just heard, what are some Common Challenges many of you are facing in this area of focus? (8 min)</li> <li>4. Next explore any Opportunities to Work Together – Are there some things you might do together? Summarize 1-2 key Opportunities to Work Together – e.g.; share information and resources, coordinate activities, work cooperatively, network, partner, and/or collaborate to effectively address this area of focus. (10 min)</li> <li>5. Ask the Scribe to write your summary points on a fresh flip chart sheet for the report to the full group. Report: 1-2 challenges and 1-2 opportunities (10 min total report time)</li> </ol>
<b>How to Debrief:</b>	<p>After each Area of Focus Table reports out, ASK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ How was this experience for you?</li> <li>✓ Did you find you had much in common? How did that feel?</li> <li>✓ Did you discover any opportunities to work together that you think you'll follow-up on – either as a group or with one or two other organizations?</li> </ul>

## Networking Activity Worksheet

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Let's Collaborate: Building Partnerships Activity</b>
<b>Length of Time</b>	30-40 minutes
<b>Materials Needed</b>	Flip chart, easel, markers, name tags
<b>Objectives and Outcomes</b>	<p>Encourage more partnering to eliminate duplication, leverage resources and coordinate activities.</p> <p>Provide an opportunity to create business/nonprofit partnerships, coordinate fundraising activities, volunteers &amp; resources, or do joint promotion of events and activities.</p>
<b>How many people/groups?</b>	Groups of 8-15 people in each of 4 seasons: winter, spring, summer, fall. Have flip charts in each of 4 corners of the room, with a sign for one of the seasons.
<b>Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Invite participants to go to the season in which they sponsor a major event or activity (winter, spring, summer, or fall.) 3-4 min to organize and gather.)</li> <li>● Participants select a facilitator and scribe or have people pre-arranged. Do a round robin with everyone saying: (~10 min, depending on size of group.)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Name of their organization &amp; a 5-6 sentence (no more than 1 min) description of a major activity, program or resource building (funds or volunteers) effort they sponsor or are involved with. (Scribe to capture on a flip chart.)</li> <li>○ A need or interest they have in sharing and/or recruiting volunteers, finding resources, combining activities, or doing joint promotion of an event or activity. (Scribe to capture on a flip chart.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Participants find an organization, or organizations, they have something in common with &amp; explore opportunities to: (15-20 min)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ share volunteers or resources,</li> <li>○ combine activities, or</li> <li>○ do joint promotion.</li> </ul> <p>If opportunities seem worth pursuing, identify next steps.</p> </li> </ul>
<b>How to Debrief:</b>	Ask for a few examples of results. Capture on flip chart. (5 min)

## Networking Activity Worksheet

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Weaving Connections</b>
<b>Length of Time</b>	10 minute minimum; could go longer, based on time available or until all challenges addressed.
<b>Materials Needed</b>	A skein of yarn rolled into a loose ball. Space large enough for all members to stand in a circle.
<b>Objectives and Outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Promote networking and peer learning</li> <li>● Visually demonstrate the web created through networking</li> </ul>
<b>How many people/groups?</b>	Minimum of 8-10 people to make a big enough circle; up to 20-25 will work
<b>Steps</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The facilitator asks everyone to stand in a circle. Start by asking 'who has a challenge they would like to share?' Hold onto the end of the ball of yarn and gently toss the ball to that person. They briefly share one challenge.</li> <li>2. The facilitator then asks if there is someone who has 'solved' that challenge or has a success story or relevant strategy to share? The person with the challenge grabs the end of the yarn and throws the yarn ball to the person with the success story/strategy.</li> <li>3. They share their 'success' (strategy), then share another challenge (either from their own experience or one that came up in the small group activity).</li> <li>4. Continue sharing challenges and successes/strategies and tossing the ball (with the new speaker always holding onto the end) for a few rounds depending on how much time has been set aside or until the group feels finished.</li> <li>5. Lay the web down on the ground in front of the circle and notice the complexity of the web and connections that have been woven.</li> </ol>
<b>How to Debrief:</b>	<p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What did you learn or experience from this activity?</li> <li>● What did it demonstrate about networking and networks?</li> <li>● Based on what you heard/learned, did you 'meet' someone who has knowledge or experience that you'd like to know more about? (network connection)</li> </ul>

## Networking Activity Worksheet

<b>Activity Name</b>	
<b>Length of Time</b>	
<b>Materials Needed</b>	
<b>Objectives and Outcomes</b>	
<b>How many people/groups?</b>	
<b>Steps</b>	
<b>How to Debrief:</b>	

