

How can I engage people in my project?

Learning Activity- part 1

One-on-One conversation

The focus of this module is an assignment to have a one-on-one meeting with someone to talk about your capstone project. Research the groups, congregations, schools, businesses and government officials that are in the community of your Capstone or outreach project.

In the forum for this topic and this module, write down 3 goals for your 1-1 meetings.



Talk with someone who is involved in one of these groups, or find a friend, colleague or neighbor who might be interested in what you are doing in the Master Water Stewards program. Use this assignment as an opportunity to develop a network of interested community members.

If you don't yet have a specific capstone project in mind, talk about the capstone project in general. (If you are not sure of the details of the capstone project, download and read the description, posted underneath this module on the web site.)

Before you continue with this module, watch "[Leadership Lessons from Dancing Guy](#)"

What is a "one-on-one" meeting?

- **Establish and build relationships:** A one-on-one meeting can be an exploratory conversation
- **Intentional:** The point of the meeting is to learn/communicate/share. Set goals before meeting and think about what you might ask the person you are meeting with to do to support your project. Ask for help from colleagues before you have your conversation if you aren't sure how to get started.
- **Talk 30% / Listen 70%:** Go deeper and explore the responses you get during your conversation, ask "how" and "why" questions. What motivates the person you are meeting with to engage in projects or water protection? If your conversation partner gives you short answers that have little detail, a favorite strategy of mine is to prompt them for more by saying, "That's interesting. Say more about that."

- **Timing/Location:** Go where they are. Look at their yard, buy them a cup of coffee or go somewhere free like the park by your local water body.
- **Be realistic:** Not everyone will engage; do your best to draw the person in, but don't push too hard. Follow up with those who are interested.
- **Thank people** for their time and effort.

During your meeting, consider weaving in questions such as:

- What water issues does the person care about?
- What might motivate the person to get involved in a volunteer effort?
- What stands in the way of getting involved?
- What are some talents/skills that the person might have to contribute to your efforts to make change on water issues in your community?
- Who are some other community-members that might have something to add to your efforts?

Learning Activity- part 2

Debrief your conversation

Post a reflection in the forum for this topic and this Learning Activity in the forum. Your reflection should address some of the following questions:

- How did you decide who to ask to participate in the one-on-one conversation?
- What was your approach?
- How did your meeting go? What was easy/difficult?
- What do you think motivated them to meet with you?
- Did you talk about water? If so, what about the topic of water was interesting to your conversation partner?
- Did you find common interests? What were they, and how did you discover them?
- Did you ask them to help with something? Why did you select that "ask?"
- Will you meet or talk to this person again? Why or why not?
- What advice do you have for others?
- How might you adapt your approach for a different audience?

Focusing your efforts

Another challenge we have in working with people is that we live in a culture and that culture influences our interactions. Native Minnesotans have been stereotyped as reserved; often we are called "Minnesota Nice". Minnesotans may find it hard to talk to people they don't know well. They may also be polite to a fault, resistant to change and have a hard time with rejection and confrontation.

Minnesota Nice strategies

- Keep networking. Don't get discouraged if you don't connect on the first effort with the first person you talk to.

- Focus where there is momentum and energy.
- Have realistic expectations. Recruit more people than you need.
- The Ask: Be specific and ask for what you need (instead of asking for “help”, ask for something specific, like “Will you help out at our rain garden planting day?”)
- Have a backup Ask: If you are turned down, the next question should be, “Do you know anyone who might help?”
- Remind and update people about the project you are working on and check-in regularly.
- Don’t rely on email as your primary method of communication. A phone call, in person visits events and social media are better approaches to keep people engaged.
- Evaluate your approach and barriers.

Let’s look at a few ideas to help you build a network to advance your efforts.

Think about the lessons in “[Leadership Lessons from Dancing Guy](#)”. How important were the first followers? Let’s talk about how you might find people to follow and support your project.

- Networking
 - Circle of influence – It is a Big Universe, so you will need to be strategic and find others to help and support you
 - Make an effort to meet people with shared interests and influential relationships. You are looking for “first followers” and leaders in specific social spheres. Captive audiences are also useful, such as:
 - Church green teams, school groups, community groups, event participants, , environmental commissions
 - There are, in general, three kinds of doors you can walk through to find or build a network- A, B, and C “Doors”:
 - A Doors: These are your best, closest, most dedicated supporters. They are on your side and will keep you motivated.
 - B Doors: These folks may support you, but they are cautious and will need to be cultivated.
 - C Doors: These folks don’t want to engage with you and may even try to work against you. You might need to neutralize their influence on others.

Stay organized

The final tip for engaging people in your circle of influence is to get organized- make a contact list and keep it current. You will start your list today.

On the web site, you will find a spreadsheet you can download and use to keep track of people in your network. Periodically, we’ll ask you to share your contacts so we can map where projects are happening, and where you are finding support for your efforts.