



Learning With and From Our Community Neighbors

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Quite simply, being able to learn with and from our community neighbors requires three key elements:

- 1. Ask**
- 2. Listen**
- 3. Act**

The ASK:

- Find someone who is passionate about sustainability, not necessarily who has a fancy title.
- Explain the purpose, time commitment, and expectations immediately. If you don't know exactly what will be expected, ask them if they are willing to learn and grow with you.
- Look for an organization with similar values, goals or vision.
- Ask what would be of value/importance to the partner.
- Ask what is working and what needs to be changed...often.

LISTEN, and then LISTEN more:

- Although it seems as if you have plenty of expertise and resources as an institution of higher education, you are NOT the only expert in the room.
- Ask your community partner how they do things in their world. And listen to the answer, trying to find ways to apply it to yours.
- Think of your role of that as a translator, you must listen to the language being spoken by the community neighbor and then translate it to higher education speak and then vice versa.
- When in doubt, LISTEN.

ACT:

- If a community partner is spending an hour of time at a meeting on campus, recognize that time is money. They did not attend the meeting just to talk about great ideas.
- Action is necessary, they want to see results.
- Be flexible if necessary, offer to meet at their location or at times convenient for your partner.
- Give them an opportunity to act as well.



Additional resources:

Carnegie Foundation: [Getting Ideas into Action: Building Networked Improvement Communities in Education](#)

Service Learning.org: [The Engaged Community: Maximizing Community Impact](#)

National Center for Media Engagement: [Top Ten Reasons to Engage](#)