

# Foster Green Partnerships: A Workshop for Exploring Common Ground

**This tool is available online for download at:**

<http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/department/ecco/downloads>

If you have any questions, concerns, or requests for hard copies of the tools, please contact Jennifer Hirsch at [jhirsch@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:jhirsch@fieldmuseum.org).

Green Partnership: (n) Two or more organizations working together on a community project that benefits people and the environment.

## Workshop Purpose

This workshop provides an opportunity for organizational leaders to come together to explore social and environmental issues in their community. The objective is to set the stage for new partnerships around green community action, including some that your organization can help lead or play a central role in.

## Why Green Partnerships Matter

It's become increasingly clear that the best solutions to sustainability are those that sustain not only the environment, but also people. This is because at their essence, environmental issues are community issues. Yet organizations tend to work either on environmental issues or on social/cultural issues. In many cases, groups that could be working together on shared goals have never before collaborated, and in some cases, they are unaware of one another. This workshop will help community, government, and environmental groups to explore common ground and identify issues they can work on together that will benefit both people and nature.

The Field Museum's New Allies for Nature and Culture project, completed in 2008, identified shared interests among environmental and community organizations in five areas: health, food, economic development, climate change, arts/cultural practices, and youth development (to learn more see the Project Report at

[http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/research\\_collections/ccuc/ccuc\\_sites/newallies/basics.html](http://archive.fieldmuseum.org/research_collections/ccuc/ccuc_sites/newallies/basics.html)).

Will one of these issues be a springboard for green collaboration in your community? Or will organizations coalesce around other issues? This workshop will help you find out.

# Preparing for the Workshop

## Participants and Group Size

15–30 community leaders representing a variety of organizations. You want a good balance between people from environmental organizations and people from organizations that focus more on social/cultural issues. Also it is best to have people with decision-making power in their organizations, and preferably more than one person from each organization. If you have fewer than 15 people show up, the workshop can still function, but you probably won't want to break participants into smaller groups.

## Time Needed

Approximately 3 hours; alternatively you could hold two workshops for 1.5–2 hours each, if you think you can get participants to come twice. (You would need the same participants in each workshop.)

## Space Needed

A large room with small tables seating approximately 7–10 people each. The room needs to have walls to hang photographs. Everyone needs to be able to see the screen or wall that you will use to show the Green Partnership Videos.

## Materials Needed

- For the Photograph Exhibit: What Does Green Mean?
- Photographs depicting different facets of "green" community life (see below) taped to the wall like an exhibit (<http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/department/ecco/downloads>)
- What Does Green Mean? worksheets (you'll need one per person)
- Some pens, in case participants don't bring their own

### **At small tables:**

- Table tents and markers in middle of tables
- Large Post-it pad for each table. On the first page of each pad draw the small group discussion template (see Facilitator's Notes below).
- 1 or 2 markers for the pads.
- 3-2-1 Reflect sheets – 1/person (see below)
- Green Partnership Videos (<http://fieldmuseum.org/explore/department/ecco/downloads>)
- Screen (or wall) to show videos

- Projector
- Laptop computer with web access set to <http://www.gogreenila.info> (click on LEARN/Collaborate for the Future with New Allies)
- Ball of string
- Facilitator's Notes for each small group facilitator (see below)

## Facilitation Needs

You will need one facilitator for the entire group and enough additional facilitators to have one for each small group. The facilitators will also act as note takers. They need to familiarize themselves with the resources and Facilitator's Notes ahead of time. You may wish to use participants as facilitators, which is fine as long as they are prepared.

## Who to Invite

Almost any organization, block club, business, or municipal agency has the potential to embark on a project that could be labeled “green.” Simply partnering two organizations that already consider themselves green isn't enough to get the job done. New thinking is required to solve today's environmental and social issues—and to garner new ideas, players with different backgrounds need to be involved.

Invite representatives from organizations that already work on green or environmental issues, even if they themselves don't define the issues that way. Also reach out to groups that work on the other issues listed above that have great potential to attract broad collaborations: health/food, economic development, arts/cultural practices, and youth development. Arts organizations, groups that address health and obesity issues, sports leagues, local museums or historical societies, business associations, civic boosters, education activists, groups working on issues of affordable housing or addressing hunger or housing issues—all of these and more would be great candidates for the workshop. Also consider inviting local groups or community leaders that seem particularly vibrant or innovative to you, or that you frequently hear about in the news—even if they do not work on anything you would define as “green” right now. Ask your colleagues for ideas. Cast your net wide.

Remember: ultimately you want a good balance between people from environmental organizations and people from organizations that focus more on social/cultural issues, since the ultimate goal is to foster new green partnerships between organizations that have traditionally worked on different types of issues.

## **Broad or narrow?**

Consider whether you want to have a broad discussion that covers multiple aspects of “green” in your community, or whether you want to focus more narrowly on the intersections between particular issues. If you feel unsure of what “green” issues the community and its organizations care about, or if you want to push people to think in some newer, innovative ways about what green means, then start broad. However, if you already know particular sectors that you want to connect, then you may wish to focus more narrowly on those sectors. For example, if you know there are arts organizations or individual artists in your community already interested in environmental issues, you could choose to focus your workshop on fostering green partnerships between arts organizations and environmental groups. Another factor to consider is what role you want your organization to play in moving partnerships forward after the workshop. If there are only certain green issues that your organization would be able to work on, make sure that the workshop focuses on one of those. Otherwise, you run the risk of the workshop becoming a dead end.

## **What to Prepare**

The workshop includes two activities. The first of these, What Does Green Mean?, centers on a photograph “exhibit.” The second involves viewing relevant video clips. Here are instructions for preparing for each activity.

### **What Does Green Mean?**

The goal of this activity is to spark conversation about what “green” means to people in your community. Before the participants arrive, hang photos on the meeting room walls that represent “green” places, people, activities, and issues. Display them like an exhibit. Spread them out enough so that everyone will be able to view the exhibit at the same time. You can use either The Field Museum’s What Does Green Mean? photos of scenes from the Chicago region, or photos depicting your community.

If you choose your own photos, keep in mind that you want to encourage participants to think broadly about the meaning of “green” as it relates not only to nature but to sustaining people and strengthening social relationships as well. So select and display photos that represent a wide array of scenes and interactions. Consider looking at The Field Museum photos for ideas. Note that The Field Museum photo file contains images and captions. The captions, however, are not intended to be displayed with the photos, which are meant to be evocative; the

captions are for just for the facilitator's use, to understand the images better and share if someone asks you what one of the photos is.

### **Video Viewing**

The goal of this activity is to set the stage for small group brainstorming among participants about how to collaborate for green community action. Videos will be shown to the full group. You should have time to show 2– 3 video clips, depending on the length of the workshop and which videos you choose. The Green Partnerships Videos range from 1.5 to 10 minutes; most are 3– 4 minutes.

When choosing which videos to show, consider whether you are hosting a broad or narrow workshop—as explained earlier. If you plan to bring together organizations that work on a large variety of issues, you should choose videos that touch on different themes (e.g., food, health, education). If you plan to focus on connecting particular types of groups—such as arts and environmental organizations (per the example earlier) or food-related organizations (e.g., restaurants, food pantries, farmers) and environmental groups—choose videos that are most closely related to their interests.

## **Additional Preparation**

### **Small Groups**

Participants will sit in small groups of 5–7 people. Since the goal of this workshop is to foster new partnerships, you will want to make sure that participants sit with people they don't know. If you know ahead of time who will be participating, divide them into diverse small groups. Make sure that each group includes representatives from groups that work on issues that are clearly social or cultural and on issues that are clearly environmental.

### **Think about Your Organization's (Green) Partnerships**

Since your goal is partly to define how your organization can shepherd a green partnership, it is a good idea to give some thought to the type of green partnerships your organization is interested in fostering. To do this, think about the partnerships and projects that your library is already involved in. Maybe some of your partnerships focus on green issues and you want to expand them. Or maybe you are leading some green projects on your own and you want to

take those to the next level and bring in partners. The point is to use inspiration from others to think about how to build on your library's strengths to foster collaborations that will have a significant green impact in your community.

## Prepare to Talk about Next Steps

Finally, you need to think about what the next steps will be after this workshop. At the end of the workshop, participants will likely be excited about the possibility of working with some of the people they met on some of the ideas that were generated. What will you do next? Hold another workshop to develop an initial project to work on together, perhaps at the headquarters of one of the participants' organizations? Identify a small number of participants to work together to develop a more concrete project idea, and discuss it online? Brings in others who need to be involved? Of course there is no way to predict ahead of time exactly what will come out of the workshop. The point is to have some ideas about how your organization will be able to move the partnership process forward.

## Workshop Agenda and Facilitation Instructions

<b>Time: approx. 3 hours</b>	<b>Activity</b>
15 minutes	Arrival, Registration, View Photo Exhibit
30 minutes	Welcome, Introductions: <i>What Does Green Mean?</i> Photo Exhibit Discussion Goal: Explore what "green" means in your community
75 minutes	Video Viewing and Small Group Discussions Goal: Determine starting points for collaborations around green community action
30 minutes	Report Back: Museum Exhibit
15 minutes	3-2-1 Reflect
10 minutes	Thank You, Next Steps

### Arrival, Registration, View Photo Exhibit

As people arrive, hand them a *What Does Green Mean?* worksheet and instruct them to spend about 10 minutes visiting the photo exhibit and completing the worksheet. Also provide them with their table assignment. If you didn't assign tables ahead of time, ask each participant to sit with people they do not know well or have not worked with much. Again, you want to make

sure that each group includes representatives from groups that work on issues that are clearly social or cultural and on issues that are clearly environmental. When they are done with the worksheets, direct the participants to sit down at the tables, write their names on table tents, and introduce themselves to their tablemates.

Note that *What Does Green Mean?* is a good activity to keep people busy if they arrive early. Extend it for about 10 minutes past the workshop starting time to make sure everyone has sufficient time to view and think about the photos.

## Welcome, Introductions: *What Does Green Mean?*

Begin by explaining the purpose of the workshop and how it will proceed (see below). Then move right into the *What Does Green Mean?* photo exhibit activity, which begins with LINKS, an interactive exercise in which participants introduce themselves.

Confirm with the group that everyone had the opportunity to view the photo exhibit. Then explain that you are going to engage the group in an interactive, fun exercise—LINKS—in which everyone will have a chance to introduce themselves and share their thoughts right away on what “green” means to them—by talking about the photos they selected. Now explain the exercise, which revolves around a ball of string. The person speaking will hold on to a piece of string and then throw the ball to another person. In the end, we will see how we’re all connected. There is always lots of chuckling at this point and comments about people’s lack of throwing ability—and inevitably during the throwing people will drop the ball of string. This is part of what makes this activity a great icebreaker.

Tell the group that the first person to talk will hold the ball of string and introduce himself or herself (The person’s name, organization, and 30 seconds on the organization’s mission are sufficient.) Then briefly, this person will share with the group which photo he or she chose and why. (If you think it’s necessary, you can be more specific and ask each person to explain specifically what event or experience the photo made him or her think of and what that represents about community and environment. The advantage to being more generic is that you don’t want people to list their answers because the answers may get very long.) As people are presenting their ideas, capture them with notes on one of the big Post-it pads.

Once the first person finishes, ask the group who has something in common with what the first person had to say. Then instruct the first person to hold on to the beginning of the string and throw the ball to the next person who is going to speak. Continue this exercise until everyone has had an opportunity to share their photo choice.

By the end of the exercise, each participant will be holding a section of the string. Instruct everyone to pull on their part of the string and point out that the string web shows only the tip of the iceberg about how we're all connected. Then reiterate the point that this workshop is about understanding our connections with each other and the environment.

Finally, before moving on to the next activity, peruse your notes to identify any key understandings about green that may have emerged. Point these out and write them on a new Post-it. For example, if the majority of the participants chose 1 or 2 photos, this will be worth commenting on. Or if three or more participants mentioned a particular part of the community—say, a specific park or parks in general—point that out. You may also make note of general ideas that emerged, such as ones that demonstrate what people care about most deeply regarding “community” or “environment.” Offer the opportunity for participants to add their own observations also.

## Video Viewing and Small Group Discussions

Now that participants know one another a little bit and have gained a sense of the other participants' ideas, you will move the group into a discussion about green partnerships. Explain that the goal of this part of the workshop is to brainstorm possible areas for collaboration around green community action. By the end of the workshop, you and they will leave with some concrete ideas about the types of issues and projects that the group, or some subset of the group, might want to collaborate around.

Explain that the videos you are about to watch together specifically address the subject of green collaborations in the Chicago area. The videos were produced by The Field Museum as inspiration for a similar workshop. Let the group know that after the videos, they will work in small groups to explore potential green collaborations. Then show the video clips.



## Facilitator's Notes for Small Group Discussions

Open the small group discussion by explaining its goal—and relate this back to the videos. The goal of this discussion is to identify a common concern that we all share related to going green in our community and then begin thinking about how we might address that concern by working together in new partnerships.

Organize your group's discussion around the "Working Towards Green" framework outlined on a large Post-it pad at your table. (See the template for that below; you will likely have seen this framework used in some of the videos you watched.) Lead the group through three mini-discussions focused on the three topics listed below. (These topics/themes are also included in the template itself.)

1. **Challenges:** Ask each person to share with the group a few of the key challenges or issues that his or her organization is working to address. If there is more than one representative from an organization, the two should speak together. The challenges may or may not connect people and nature; that doesn't matter. The point is to start exploring what the groups at the table have on their individual agendas, as a way of searching for things they may have in common.
2. **Connections:** Out of the list you've created, spend some time exploring possible connections between environmental and social/cultural issues and organizations. You can expand the discussion to include potential collaborators in the community who might be interested in these issues but are not present; this will help identify new participants for future efforts. For example, an organization focused on health issues and an environmental education organization might be interested in working together to encourage youth to spend more time outdoors; or an organization working on green jobs might wish to partner with an arts organization to explore green jobs related to the arts. Conclude this discussion by talking about some of the challenges that would be involved in establishing these green partnerships.
3. **Results:** Spend the last 15 minutes or so talking about which key connections seem the most promising. Ask participants to think more concretely about how they could move forward to work with new partners on a green program or activity. To conclude, ask participants to articulate how they think this program or activity would benefit people and how it would benefit the environment.

Take notes on the key points of each discussion, in the corresponding sections of your "Working Towards Green" chart.

**Keep in mind:**

Not every small group discussion will result in tangible next steps, and a potential partnership may not clearly emerge in this one small time slot. The simple act of having been together and listening to one another may lead to something significant some time in the future. If the conversation in your small group helps participants understand each other's work and aspirations but falls short of identifying a concrete collaborative project idea, that understanding is still a significant step forward for the community and the environment.

## Report Back: Museum Exhibit

Continuing the exhibit theme that opened this workshop, the gathering will close with another exhibit-type activity. Hang the Post-it templates, now filled in with notes for each section, on one wall. Again, spread them out enough so that everyone can "visit" the exhibit at the same time. Then instruct the participants to spend 7–10 minutes reading and thinking about what is there.

Ask them to jot down their observations and reactions to:

1. Themes and patterns that seem to stand out across groups. For example, did the groups focus on similar issues? Do one or two issues in particular stand out as having lots of interest?
2. Points from other groups that they find compelling or want to know more about.

When people seem finished or when time runs out, ask everyone to sit back down together. It's time for a concluding discussion about what people have learned about connecting social and environmental issues and partners. Start by asking participants to comment on how their small group discussions went. Then ask them to share their responses to the group's work overall as seen in the exhibit.

## Closing Out the Workshop

Conclude with a discussion about one or both of these next steps, depending on your library's interest and capacity:

### **3-2-1 Reflect: Find out what connections participants have made that they plan to follow up on.**

Hand out the "3-2-1 Reflect" worksheet and give participants 3-5 minutes to fill it out. (The worksheet is below.) Then ask participants to share some of the things they wrote with the group. Make sure that a few people share answers to the last question: "What is one thing that you can commit to doing in the next week as a result of this workshop?" Ask if there is anything that your organization can do to help participants act on what they learned today.

### **Thank You, Next Steps: Facilitate a discussion about what, if anything, the whole group wants to do together around green community action.**

Does the group want to meet again—possibly to do another engagement activity that will help to further explore potential green action projects? Talk to key organizations that were missing? Try out some kind of initial joint program? How can your organization facilitate next steps?

Help the group understand the ways in which they have succeeded today. While it's possible (and commendable) that big steps forward were achieved, it's important to point out small ones, too. Growth of a potential green partnership may become apparent down the line.



# WORKING TOWARDS GREEN

## Template with Facilitator's Notes for Small Group Discussions

### 1. Challenges

List organizations' key challenges (issues) here, e.g.:

- Youth education
- Job training
- Environmental restoration
- Social services
- etc.

### 2. Connections

Explore green connections between issues and organizations.

ASK: How could your organizations work on these challenges in ways that simultaneously address social and environmental issues? Are there any potential partnerships among organizations in your small group?

Also discuss the challenges that would be involved in making this link/establishing these partnerships.

Refer back to the videos when helpful.

### 3. Results

What would some possible results of these connections/partnerships be?

1. Concrete programs/activities
2. How would these benefit people? The natural environment?

## 3-2-1 Reflect

Take a moment to reflect on today's workshop.

What are three things from today that you were excited to learn?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

List two organizations or people you met with potential for new ideas/partnerships.

- 1.
- 2.

What is the one thing that you can commit to doing in the next week as a result of this workshop?

- 1.

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