

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Community Engagement Training for County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs) and Staff



Overview

The purpose of this guide is to give you an overview of your role in facilitating this training. The goal of the training is to improve County Agricultural Commissioners (CACs) and their staff's understanding of community engagement and to strengthen collaboration and effective engagement with community members.

You will be working with a PowerPoint presentation of 27 slides, which include facilitator's notes. It takes about 25 minutes to cover the slides without interruption. The entire training is designed to last approximately 2 hours, depending on how much time you allow for questions and discussion.



When you see a megaphone icon in this guide, the italicized text next to it is a script that you can choose to use when introducing a topic or providing an opportunity for questions or discussion.

Before the Training

If you are not already familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the CACs, you should spend some time before the training gaining a [basic understanding](#) of what they do and the various ways they engage with their communities. It would also be helpful to have some familiarity with the kinds of communities the CACs work with.

You need to be proficient in working with PowerPoint slides. You also need to be familiar and comfortable with the logistics for the training, including how the room will be set up (if the training is in-person) or how to lead the presentation and discussion by computer (if the training is online). In either case you should do a dry run of the training on whatever equipment you will be using.

The hope is that this training will not only provide participants with useful information and skills but will also provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences, ideas and learn from each other. To encourage this kind of participant interchange, this guide provides you with suggestions, beyond what is in the script, to help you facilitate your session effectively.

For this purpose, the slides are divided into six segments:

- Welcome and Introductions (Slides 1 – 4)
- What is Community Engagement? (Slides 5 – 9)
- Components of Effective Community Engagement (Slides 10 – 15)
- What Does Community Engagement Look Like? (Slides 16 – 18)
- Exercise: Engaging Effectively With Your Community Members (Slides 19 – 23)
- Success Stories and Wrap-Up (Slides 24 – 27)

As you complete each segment, you should ask the participants if they have any questions or comments. If there are none, this guide provides you with some possible follow-up questions you might ask to prompt discussion. You may use these or others that make sense to you. Your goal should be to encourage participants to share and learn from each other. Please be mindful of not letting the conversation carry on too long so the training stays on schedule.

Facilitating the Training

Welcome and Introductions (Slides 1 – 4, 20 minutes without icebreaker, 30 minutes with icebreaker)

You should create a welcoming, friendly environment for the participants as they arrive. You should acknowledge or shake hands with all of them and help them to feel comfortable. You should let participants know what, if any, interpretation services are available.

When the group is assembled, thank everyone for coming and then introduce yourself and how the time together will unfold. This should include logistical aspects, such as the session timing and breaks and, if online, instructions about how everyone can interact effectively (e.g., the raise hand feature). It should also include the expectation that the session will be interactive and encourage everyone to contribute their thoughts and ideas in a respectful way. Check in with participants to see if they have any questions at this point.

Have the participants briefly introduce themselves with their name and title.

Optional: Conduct an icebreaker. Whether to do this or not should be determined ahead of time. If the participants generally know each other it may not be a good use of their time. If the organizers of the training suggest that it would be worthwhile, work with them to select an appropriate icebreaker approach. The icebreaker should be done with the full group. If the group is very large, it may not be possible to hear from everyone. You do not want this part of the session to last more than 10 minutes (or less if you are already behind schedule). Here are a few topic ideas:

- *What is your favorite part of your job?*
- *What is some interesting fact about your life that most people do not know?*
- *What is the biggest surprise you have had, or lesson learned, in engaging your community members?*

Cover the topics for the day (Slide 3) and play the slideshow on Slide 4.

What is Community Engagement? (Slides 5 – 9, 15 minutes)



The next several slides introduce the practice of community engagement. This includes the definition and importance of a strong commitment to environmental justice.

Cover Slides 5 through 9.

Follow-up questions:



- *Would anyone like to add to what the slides covered?*
- *How has the concept of environmental justice influenced your work?*

If you are not able to elicit some discussion from the participants, you could say that people may have had different experiences engaging with their community members.



We all may have had different experiences with community engagement. Is anyone able to share an experience you had that was surprising, helpful or not so helpful?

If you still are not getting any response, you can read one of the two scenarios from the Exercise segment (Slide 19). Say that as you continue through the slides, they should be thinking about how they would handle the situation.

Components of Effective Community Engagement (Slides 10 – 15, 15 minutes)



The purpose of this block of slides is to provide you with

- 1. A basic understanding of the foundations of meaningful community engagement*
- 2. An overview of best practices*

Cover Slides 10 – 15.

Follow-up questions:



- From your experience, is anything important missing from these four basic principles?*
- Before we look at the next few slides about specific engagement approaches, would anyone like to share how you have reached out to your local community groups for their input on matters of concern or issues that may affect them?*

What Does Community Engagement Look Like? (Slides 16 – 18, 15 minutes)



The purpose of this next block of slides is to provide you with an overview and understanding of some effective approaches and activities for successful community engagement. You may already be doing some of these or have your own approaches to community engagement activities, which you are welcome to share with the group after these few slides.

Cover Slides 16 – 18.

Follow-up questions:



- What approaches have you found most useful?*
- What is your preferred style of engaging community members, and why does that seem to work best?*
- Who are the stakeholders you currently engage with, and what engagement styles seem to work best with these groups?*
- Take a moment to think about the pre-existing avenues to connect with your community, such as public events, local radio or news stations, or community-based organizations, and write some down in your workbook that may be helpful to you.*

Break (10 minutes)

Exercise: Engaging Effectively With Your Community Members (Slides 19 – 23, 20 minutes)

The purpose of the exercise is to have the participants think through how they could thoughtfully respond to an unhappy or upset community member. Two possible scenarios are provided. You can either select the scenario to use ahead of time in consultation with the training sponsor, or you could read both scenarios and ask the group which is the most useful one to work with. There is not enough time to do both in a meaningful way.

You want to frame the exercise in a positive way. You could say it is an opportunity to come up with one's own approach and then to hear and learn from others. You want to emphasize there is never one correct way to respond. It depends on the circumstances of the situation and one's own temperament, preferences and experience. However, there are more and less skillful approaches that can be learned. This is an opportunity to consider and practice what you would be comfortable doing.

You should first ask participants to take three minutes to think through how they would respond. Then, if the training is in person, you should break the group into dyads or triads and ask the participants to share their ideas among themselves. Allow about seven minutes for this before bringing everyone back together. In the time remaining, ask participants to briefly share what they thought about and learned from the small group conversations. If the training is online and you do not have the capacity to form breakout groups, after giving the three minutes for individual thought, you will need to facilitate having participants share their ideas and approaches with the full group.

Each of the two scenario descriptions is followed by a list of the kinds of responses that are generally more skillful. When the participants begin sharing their ideas, you should be listening to see if these or similar responses are included. Toward the end of the period, you could suggest any missing options as something to note.

You should take the last minute of the exercise time to sum up what has been discussed, highlighting a few of the responses that had the most resonance with the group. Be sure to emphasize that “one size does not fit all” and that the most skillful responses come with practice and from a personally authentic approach.

Scenario Introduction



As you have heard throughout this training, effective community engagement involves good planning, persistent trust-building and lots of hard work that doesn't always end up in the way that you hope or expect. Despite your best efforts, you will sometimes be confronted with angry or dissatisfied constituencies, whether they are industry members, community residents, or even another county staff person. Consequently, an important skill is responding constructively rather than getting defensive when concerns are brought forward.

[If you mentioned the scenarios earlier in the training you would now say:]



Remember the scenario I mentioned earlier on? We are now going to work through it. I hope the training presentation so far will help you think through your response.

[If you did not mention the scenarios earlier, you would say:]



We are now going to take some time to consider a scenario of such a situation. I hope the training presentation so far will help you think through your response.



Scenario 1: You are speaking at a community meeting or talking at an open house with several community members. One person angrily confronts you about a recent pesticide exposure or incident. How would you skillfully respond to this individual?

In their answers, participants should be mentioning these kinds of ways of responding to an angry person:

- Listen calmly and attentively, while allowing the person to vent.
- Acknowledge their anger and the reason for it (e.g., I understand you are upset about...).
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Paraphrase the concerns as you understand them, including the feelings.
- Apologize if it is appropriate (e.g., I'm truly sorry this happened to you).
- Explain what you will do (e.g., this is something I want to look into/ I will work with you to make sure everyone is OK/I or my staff will follow up to see how this can be prevented in the future).
- Ask the person if there is anything else you need to know or think about with respect to the incident/problem.
- Tell them when you will get back to them, provide your contact information, and be sure that you follow through.



Scenario 2: A community member says to you, “You don’t really care about us. Occasionally you drop by, but you never do anything for this community.” How would you skillfully respond to this person?

In their answers, participants should be mentioning these kinds of ways of responding to a dissatisfied person:

- I’m sorry you feel this way. Please help me understand how I can and should be more helpful to you.
- Listen attentively.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Paraphrase the concerns as you understand them, including feelings, as appropriate.
- If you have somehow responded to any of the concerns, calmly describe what you have done and then be open to being more responsive if the issues are in your area of responsibility.
- Explain if the problems are not your responsibility and offer to help connect them with the authorities who can assist.
- Be clear about what you can and will do. Make no promises you cannot keep.

When You Should Apologize:

One frequent question when thinking about these kinds of scenarios is whether you should apologize or express some kind of regret. If that topic comes up during the scenario discussion, here are some ideas for facilitating the discussion:

- Best: I apologize. I should have gotten back to you as I said I would. I will ensure you have the information tomorrow and promise to do better next time.
- Adequate: I’m sorry I forgot to get back to you. It won’t happen again.
- Poor: I should have gotten back to you sooner.

Saying “I apologize” is a stronger statement of regret than “I’m sorry.” If you have made a mistake, such as forgetting something you committed to do, or inadvertently embarrassing or ignoring someone, you should take ownership of the error and apologize. If you have done nothing wrong, but want to express your sympathy to someone, you might say, “I’m sorry to hear that.”

When You Have Not Been in Error, and Someone is Angry with You:

- Best: I am so sorry about the pesticide accident that contaminated your yard. It shouldn't have happened, and I understand your anger. Let's work together to make sure this doesn't happen again.
- Adequate: I hear you. Let's see what we can do about the situation.
- Poor: Calm down so we can talk.

Success Stories and Wrap-Up (Slides 24 – 27, 20 minutes)

Play Success Stories video.

After listening to the success stories (Slide 24) here are some possible questions to ask the participants:



- *Now that we have heard some stories about how your peers have engaged with their communities, would anyone be willing to share an experience where you learned a valuable lesson about meaningful engagement?*
- *During this training session, have you heard a new idea that you think will be helpful for engaging with your communities?*
- *What is your most important takeaway from today's session?*

Wrap up with the final 3 slides.

Be sure to remind everyone of other resources available, thank everyone for their participation, and acknowledge the people who developed the training and who organized the training.

Before participants leave, ask them to take 5 minutes to fill out the anonymous feedback survey (next page).

Participant Feedback Survey

For the first three questions, circle the number that best represents your assessment of the training.

	Not So Much		Very Much	
	1	2	3	4
Did you find this training worthwhile?				
Did this training increase your understanding of community engagement roles and environmental justice issues?				
Did this training provide you with new insights on engagement approaches and techniques?				

What is an engagement approach you have not previously used and are likely to try?

Do you have any suggested improvements for the content and delivery of this training?

Is there some additional training you would find useful?

Do you have anything else you would like to share?