

COMMUNITY GARDENING 102

SOCIOLOGY: MAKING THE GARDEN A NEIGHBORHOOD EFFORT.



MAKE CONNECTIONS – BUILD COALITIONS – GATHER THE NEIGHBORS

Your community is full of individuals and groups who are interested in participation in community gardens.

Consider partnering with nearby. . .

Schools
Universities
Neighborhood associations
Churches
Community centers
Park management
Non-profit organizations
Businesses
Civic and cultural groups
Senior centers
Assisted-living housing
Government agencies

Define Your Group Structure

Many community gardens come to a point in their development when they need greater recognition and additional resources in order to effectively meet the goals of their group. These groups often look to their neighbors and define a structure in which they work together.

Network: two or more groups exchanging information about experiences and lessons learned.

Alliance: two or more groups exchanging information and sharing some tasks or tools.

Partnership: two or more groups exchanging information, sharing resources and creating activities for mutual benefit.

Coalition: like a partnership but with formal links and commitments, a joint budget, joint fundraising efforts, formal decision-making structure and shared leadership.

Collaboration: like a coalition but with consensus decision-making and formal evaluation processes; the goal is building an interdependent system to address issues and opportunities.

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Guidelines for Successful Coalition Building

1. Develop clear understanding and respect for coalition members' self interest
2. Provide opportunities for members to share their stories or backgrounds and what led them to work for their organization and participate in the coalition
3. Identify unifying issues to work on
4. Structure the coalition to meet members' self interest: hold a strategic planning session to determine everything regarding the coalition, from its mission to its fundraising strategy
5. Urge stable and senior representation at meetings
6. Recognize that contributions vary from group to group
7. Respect each group's internal process
8. Structure decision-making carefully
9. If there is staff, being neutral is important: define roles from the beginning
10. Play to the center with tactics: know who your target is and develop strategies for accomplishing your goals.

Working with broadly-based coalitions poses tremendous advantages and complex challenges.

Advantages:

1. Combined, diverse set of skills, interests, ideas and backgrounds
2. Increased power because of the number of organizations
3. Increased and diverse resources
4. Increased credibility
5. Broadened scope
6. Increased awareness of diversity issues
7. Deepened relationships with community

Challenges:

1. Clearly defining and sharing responsibility
2. Holding people accountable
3. Maintaining momentum
4. Giving credit
5. Managing power
6. Making decisions
7. being efficient
8. Appreciating those involved
9. Bridging geographical and social distances
10. Facilitating effectively
11. Trust
12. Listening