



Organizer's Guide for Peer-to-Peer Learning Groups

Peer-to-Peer learning simply means participants are considered both learners and teachers in a relationship and a chance to learn with and from one another. This guide assumes that an organizer or group of organizers are planning to take on the task of helping a group form, begin meeting, and sustain meaningful gatherings for the sake of learning and sharing in the realities of agricultural livelihoods, ways of life and land management.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES: WHY DO THIS?

Establishing a Peer-to-Peer learning group will enhance people's ability to:

- Problem solve in creative, connected, and collaborative ways.
- De-stress and relate across shared realities of land-based work.
- Engage across many learning styles and experiences.
- Connect with neighbors, build accountability, and strengthen support for successful agriculture practices and land stewardship.

BEST LOCATION

In-person as often as possible for direct connection and hands-on experiences. Use communication technologies to maintain connection, share ideas, and suggest next activities. In addition, find ways the group agrees to connect when in-person is not possible.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: WHAT CAN PARTICIPANTS LEARN?

This guide includes tools, tips and examples for forming, sustaining and maintaining peer learning communities in farming, forestry, land stewardship and other growing pursuits.

Farmers, land stewards, and farm supporters will learn:

- Approaches to organizing groups of farmers to learn from one another.
- Communication skills in various situations and various approaches.
- Approaches for people to exchange skills, experiences and suggestions with one another in respectful ways.

BEST TIME OF YEAR

In person: November - April when people with land-based livelihoods have more planning and meeting time.



Mentorship Organizer's guide

IMPORTANCE FOR BEGINNING FARMERS

Peer-to-peer groups allows beginning farmers to learn with and connect with others who face similar challenges. and experiences Unlike formal classes, peer learning connects new farmers with people who understand the real problems of agriculture. This creates a helpful community where they can share advice and support. More experienced people in have opportunities to share guidance problem solving and just words of encouragement.

- Discuss and share about what works best in their local area.
- Learn approaches from one another.
- Avoid common mistakes.
- Sharing experiences helps beginners feel less alone and more confident in their farming journey.
- Peer groups also encourage motivation, as farmers support each other through tough times.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

- Build relationships and trust with peers and mentors
- Team building and sharing
- Problem solving through team work
- Sharing resources, ideas, and knowledge

Facilitator Planning & Preparation

Activity	Est. Instructional Time
Initial Meeting (Sections 1 & Section 2)	2 Hours
Group Q&A Session (Section 3)	1 Hr, 30 Min
Farm tour (Section 4)	2 Hours
Farm tour (Section 4)	2 Hours



Organizing Concepts

Process Component Definitions:

Peer-to-Peer Learning	"Peer learning, or peer instruction, is a type of collaborative learning that involves people working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts or find solutions to problems.
Facilitator	Someone who guides a group of people to understand their common objectives and assists them to create a plan to achieve these goals. This person should help but not take a particular position in the discussion. An "organizer" may fulfill this role for a time as the group is starting. Peer-to-Peer learners should rotate and share this role.
Group Agreements	Rules, intentions, and guidelines for behavior and interaction that are agreed upon by the whole group.
Facilitated Learning	The facilitator's role is to share basic concepts and resources with participants and to guide them in their conversations to understand one another and work collaboratively.
Experiential Learning	Participants observe farm-land and market management systems of their peers through visits to other's farms. They reflect and discuss experiences and findings and how they can relate to their own farm. Finally they try out new agricultural methods and share findings. Farm tours and hands-on group learning are ways to engage in this approach.

Definition References:

1. **Peer learning** - Cornell university, <https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/active-collaborative-learning/collaborative-learning>
2. **Facilitator approaches**- Michigan State University Extension, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources <https://www.canr.msu.edu/facilitation/>
3. **Forming group agreements** - The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University: <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/group-agreements>
4. What is and how to use **experiential learning** - United States National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/experiential-learning-model>



Peer to Peer Learning Processes:

The Peer-to-Peer learning process is best suited for **people who live near one another and who are likely to develop and strengthen common goals while learning together.**

This process is strongly encouraged for farmers, foresters, and land stewards who:

- Have similar markets and agricultural systems such as crops and size of farms
- Who want exposure to different farming approaches and a variety of crops
- Share a similar management system or methodology
- Who share a connected identity



Establishing and supporting a Peer-to-Peer learning process can address a great variety of challenges and opportunities in farming through creative and collaborative approaches.

The discussion, decision-making processes, and networking skills that the group develops over time can enhance:

- Long term ability to trouble-shoot and manage risk factors that often occur in agricultural livelihoods.
- Farmers increase their understanding of realistic conditions and challenges that occur in agricultural livelihoods due to learning from the experiences of their peers.



Peer-to-Peer Organizer's Guide

Toolkit Sections:

Section 1

Getting Started - Outreach

In the Outreach section you will find suggestions for communicating about a Peer-to-Peer learning group. It addresses recruiting and involving collaborators.

Section 2

Building to Last - Group Formation

In the Group Formation section you will find suggestions and starting points to start conversations, spark connection, and build trust.

Section 3

Maintaining Interest - Meeting Ideas

In the Meeting Ideas you will find topics, questions, and processes to support group learning and discussion.

Section 4

Exploring & Sharing -On-land Learning

In the On-land learning section you will find suggested approaches and promising practices for learning by way of observations and activities on land that members of this group are caring for. For additional ideas of on farm activities visit the other curricula, IPM, soil health, pollinators, produce safety-all offer ways to co learn

Section 5

Appendix - Templates and Examples

This Appendix organizes sample communications, agendas, instructions to support each stage of your group process.



Review and Reflect Before Launching Your Peer-to-Peer Process

After reviewing the first two sections of this guide, each facilitator should first consider their own responses to these reflection and discussion questions. Once everyone has reflected then share and discuss with one another.

Questions to consider before launching your peer learning group:

- **Who do you aim to invite to participate? Which groups or communities might you risk leaving out of the conversation who are important to the values and purpose of this peer group? What strategies will you use to attract participants? How will you maintain active participation?**
 - Consider how you'll recruit members, keep them engaged, and create incentives for continued involvement. This could include regular meetings, working on useful projects together, regularly seek group input for ideas of activities and learning events, and fostering a strong sense of community.
- **What are the goals and purpose of the group?**
 - Shaping specific objectives and approaches with the Peer-to-peer group (e.g., skill-sharing, support, networking, etc.) will help ensure that the group stays focused and provides value to one another.
- **How can you help to ensure that the group maintains a positive and productive environment?**
 - It's crucial to define guidelines and establish mechanisms for conflict resolution, ensuring that members feel safe, respected, and motivated to engage in meaningful ways.



Additional Toolkits and Approaches for Peer-to-Peer Learning

Guidelines on Starting a Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) Program

A CRAFT program provides farmer-to-farmer learning and access to the social network and culture of local farmers. This page outlines essential considerations and questions for starting a farmer-to-farmer training group -

www.craftfarmer.org/p/guidelines-on-starting-craft-program_10.htm

Facilitating Farmer-to-Farmer Education: Organizing a Farm Walk Series

Farm Walks are Peer-to-Peer, on-farm education events for farmers to learn about innovative farming practices and build relationships with peers in their community. Tilth Producers of Washington have held their Farm Walk Program for more than a decade and developed this instruction guide to help other organizations sponsor and organize Farm Walks in their communities.

www.ams.usda.gov/reports/farm-walk-peer-education-program-instruction-guide



1. Getting Started - Outreach and Recruitment

Starting a group depends on your efforts to communicate effectively with potential participants. In this section you will find suggestions and templates for communicating about a Peer-to-Peer learning group and for recruiting collaborators.

OVERVIEW

In this section:

- Gather initial input
- Make plans for a first meeting
- Share the meeting invitation

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Be clear, be open
- Make starting suggestions and be flexible. Seek their input
- Ask for input and suggestions
- Meet in-person as much as possible, especially at first
- Reminders and nudges are appreciated
- Identify common interests
- Seek agreement, do not assume

ORGANIZERS' BACKGROUND

To start a Peer-to-Peer group, you will need to communicate the potential benefit of meeting as a group with collaborators. Best to start this in the off-season.

Expect and assume that busy lives and land-based work will be a barrier for people to respond and get involved. Be patient and be consistent.

You can motivate people and make it easier for them to take steps by communicating in these ways:

- Speak to shared identities, values and goals
- Outline clear steps for planning the first meeting
- Propose examples of the first few meetings and activities
- Seek their input and ideas

Getting input on these things early on will help you to organize effectively:

- Communication preference (Text, call, email etc.)
- When is best to meet?
- How often to meet?
- What activities or topics are priority?



1. Getting Started - Outreach and Recruitment

COMMUNICATION STEPS:

1. Gather initial input

Before reaching out to a larger group (6 or more people), first discuss some ideas that you could accomplish with a few other people. Consider having a few one-on-one conversations starting with people who you have talked with about farming and land stewardship practices in the past. It is best to work outward from those who already share a related identity, growing methods, product focus, or scale of production - start small and work to include others who can relate to the shared purpose that emerges from the shared input process.

In these conversations try to identify similar hopes and suggestions. Share a few of your own and then listen to additions, improvements, and alternatives that others offer

.

Discuss questions like:

- What are things we could talk about and learn from each other that would benefit us all? What is missing from this list of topics?
- What problem are you trying to solve now? Do you have a problem that keeps repeating, year after year?
- What's hardest about land-based work right now for you? Physically or emotionally



1. Getting Started - Outreach and Recruitment

COMMUNICATION STEPS (cont.)

2. Make plans for a first meeting

- If discussions go well, decide when and how to meet.
- Write an email, text and/or social media post that communicates your ideas about the benefits of meeting with others. (OR prepare some talking points you can share in person.)
- Choose a date and time at least two weeks away that works for 3 - 5 of the people you have spoken with already or are meeting.
- Select a location that will be welcoming and inclusive to a wide range of participants. Meet in a place that's not a home so no one has to serve as host for the first meeting - it's fine to consider shifting to homes with clear group agreements (see group agreements in Section 2).

3. Share the meeting invitation with a wider group:

- Communicate the meeting details along with = ideas of the benefits to the group. Do this through a clear and simple message. (Example in the appendix).
- A good size group that works for most is between 8 - 12 participants, but this number will vary based on cultural preference and community norms. Any size group of enthusiastic people is worth the effort to connect and meet.



1. Getting Started - Outreach and Recruitment

EXTENSIONS

Encourage newcomers to join and attend the first 3 - 4 meetings to see how they like it. It may take some time for everyone to get these meetings on their schedule and make time for them. You will not be able to schedule a time that works for everyone at the start.

Document your process and discussions as much as possible. This will allow people to follow along and join in when they can. Note taking recommendations are offered in the following section on Group Forming.

People may have a deep desire to participate even though they cannot join the first meeting (or first five). Keep communicating.

VARIATIONS

Be sure to focus on providing a quality in-person time before you try to add **virtual meeting options**. Only move at the comfort and speed of the people who get involved to make meetings virtual or hybrid (in-person and virtual). Forming that in person relationship is important to the success of this group.

CONNECTIONS

To confront potential challenges and failures to include some people effectively, engage in Activity 1 from Leading with Values Module - "Interrogating, Defining and Resisting Oppressive Systems" -



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

Building and sustaining group will succeed best when your group processes and norms support everyone being seen, heard, respected, and valued. Consistent and effective communication is a must. Spend time working on how you will act towards one another in order to set up a solid foundation for your group to grow from.

OVERVIEW

In this section:

- Tips for effective communication
- Tools to support group involvement (agendas and notes)
- Forming group agreements

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Communicate consistently
- Prepare people for time together, but don't overwhelm
- Gather input and use it
- Share responsibility, divide the work
- Give time for individual reflection before group discussion
- All groups move through various stages, including times of tension

ORGANIZERS' BACKGROUND

Forming a new group, especially one where all participants are equally respected and valued for their contributions requires patience, consistency and care. You need to pay special attention to ensuring that everyone has the an environment, process and relationships that allow them to participate safely and without hesitation. If you and your group proceed with these principles in mind, you will begin to build the trust that is essential for anything good you might do together.

This section suggests preparations and processes to bring your group together in ways that honor and respect each individual while building a common sense of purpose.

The suggestions and processes in this section can also be used for bringing a group back together after times apart from one another, or when a large number of new people join.



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

Keep Communication Consistent

Staying consistent in your communications is important leading up to your first group meeting:

- You should communicate clear and concise information on a consistent schedule prior to your first meeting. This gives people a chance to begin understanding your purpose and process for coming together before you meet.
- Your care and attention to details sends signals that this process is being valued and supported by others. Consistency and effort on the part of the meeting organizers gives participants confidence that they will not waste their time to come to a meeting.
- Review the example “Message Template for First Meeting” in the Appendix for some examples of what to share with others before your first meeting.

Build and Use Meeting Agendas

Communicating clearly and deciding together about how to use your time as a group essential ways that the members of your group can share in responsibility and power:

- 1 - 2 weeks in advance of each meeting, share an agenda with everyone that lists the topics or processes you will spend time on. Include the amount of time you estimate spending on each thing and also include a brief description.
- Ask for input, ideas, and alterations every time you send an agenda. Introduction (or reintroduction meetings), will often require similar steps.

The purpose of the first few meetings will almost always be for individuals to be introduced, to deepen individual relationships, and to identify with a broader group purpose. **An example agenda for a first group meeting is included in the appendix** for the group organizers to review and revise based on your prior understanding and relationships with the group forming.



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

Meeting Agenda Template

Meeting basics

When:

Where:

Other logistics (standard fare for events):

Agenda **Note that times may be adjusted to accommodate a very small or very large group*

- [15min before start] Arrival and settling in
- [5 min] Conversations and Ideas that led to this group meeting
- [10 min - 20 min] Introductions of everyone (depending on group size)
- [15 min] Group agreements
- [15 min] Discuss the how, when, where of these meetings
- [10 min] Rapid brainstorm of topic and conversations we could have
- [5 min] Wrap-up reflections, lingering questions, closing
- [5 min - 10 min] Announcements from the group about resources and events

Preparation prior to meeting for all participants [20 - 40 min suggested reflection and writing time]:

- Consider your reason for being involved [suggested time 5 -7 min] Consider again and jot down something to share with others in the group:
 - Why are you interested/excited to be involved in this learning, sharing and doing process with others?
 - What's one of the specific opportunities you are starting to think about for the land you steward? Especially what you think might be made possible by taking this time to think and plan about land-based activities with others?
 - What are you worried might distract, disrupt or derail some of your hopes for this group process?
 - How do you hope this group might help you overcome obstacles?



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

Sections for The Your First Meeting in Eight Parts

1. Offer the **opportunity for people to arrive 15 minutes prior** to your official start time so that people have plenty of time to arrive and settle in. This allows some time for people to connect and chat on their own.
2. **Start on time**, or check in with the group about waiting up to 5 additional minutes for people who you know are coming to arrive.
3. One person provide **words of welcome and briefly introduce the purpose of the group** as it has been discussed or suggested so far.
4. Take time for **individual introductions** of everyone present. Keep it simple to name, home location, land location (if separate home) and one additional question such as "what are you interested to learn more about with the people in this group?"
 - Depending on group sizes this can take a lot of time. Some strategies to fit it within time constraints include:
 - One of the organizers models a short, but complete response to the prompts first
 - Set a timer to automatically go off for the same duration for everyone. Make it lighthearted to pass turns to the next person.
 - Make it clear that each meeting you will repeat introductions in this manner and that over time, you will have lots of opportunities to be introduced and get to know one another.
5. **Establish group agreements** for how you will communicate, respect one another, and share responsibilities for the group. The group agreement ***process is explained on the next page.***
6. Get **group input regarding ongoing meetings** including: What time works best for future meetings? How long should meetings be? What are good locations?
7. **Brainstorm topics and conversations of interest** to the group. Set the expectation that every suggestion will be accepted and that only questions for clarification about the meaning of the suggestion are permitted. The goal is to generate a BIG list, not to prioritize or criticize ideas yet.
8. Spare a little time at the end of the group time for **event and resource announcements** specific to the group's interests.



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

What are GROUP AGREEMENTS and Why Have them?

Group agreements are defined as the “Rules, intentions, and guidelines for behavior and interaction that are agreed upon by the whole group.”¹ This practice which is sometimes used in academic settings is very effective for groups of self-guided learners, especially in a peer-to-peer relationship where knowledge and leadership is shared.

Taking the time to carefully establish and regularly recommit to group agreements can:

- Prevent conflicts,
- Manage tensions,
- Build a healthy group culture, and
- Keep meetings respectful and supportive of everyone.

Group agreements can and should become a part of the **culture of your group**. Organizers should support the entire group to feel power, ownership, and accountability to agreements. Create them through a discussion process at the very start of your group (or in coming back together or anytime) and customizing them to all the aspects of your groups, needs, identity, and hopes. Call them anything you want that fits your group identity and values, but be sure to use them as an powerful tool to ensuring a safe and supportive group for everyone for a long time.

¹ *Forming group agreements* - The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard University: <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/group-agreements>



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

Forming Group Agreements

- **Explain the Purpose:** Let the group know that you're creating agreements to make sure everyone feels respected, included, and supported. Emphasize that these rules will help everyone work together better.
- **Ask for Input:** Invite everyone to share what they need to feel included and valued. For example, ask, "What makes you feel respected in a group?" Write down everyone's ideas.
- **Discuss and Prioritize:** Review the ideas. Clarify items that are unclear and discuss what is most important. Make sure everyone's voice is heard.
- **Agree Together:** Once the group has discussed, ask for verbal or physical agreement. Full agreement from everyone in the group is required to wrap up this process. Discuss concerns or revisions needed to get to full group agreement.
- **Review Regularly:** As a group to check in on these agreements to make sure they're being followed.





2. Building to Last - Group Forming

EXAMPLE Group Agreements

(NOTES: These are real-world examples. You may choose to use some as a starting point for participants, but this list should be created, contributed to, and revised by all group participants continuously.)

- Assume best intentions AND discuss the impact of what is said.
- Ask questions (obvious and frequent). Prompt for clarification frequently AND don't assume prior knowledge (acronyms, technical terms, etc.)
- Try out new ideas and approaches.
- For the benefit of all, share rough draft ideas and plans without shame or apology. Be open to feedback.
- WAIT? / AINT? (Why am I talking? / Am I Not Talking?)
- Call out to the group when something is uncomfortable or difficult.
- Honor confidentiality
- Don't quote opinions but share your own.
- Ask for consent to share personal experiences
- Be very clear when confidentiality is required
- Practice technology awareness and respect. Ask if others have knowledge about how to do something and start from that point.
- Take time for personal needs
- Be sure all is staying on track following the agreed agenda



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES

Taking Notes and Sharing Often

Taking notes and sharing them with others in a peer-to-peer learning group is important because it helps everyone remember what was discussed and makes sure nothing is missed. Notes capture the main ideas and important points from the discussion, so people can look back at them later to understand things better - especially people who miss a particular meeting. Sharing notes helps everyone stay on the same page, and it gives everyone a chance to learn from each other's thoughts. This way, everyone can remember and understand the direction of the group and more easily, It will enhance the knowledge and experience you gather together and making the learning experience better for the whole group.

Request Input and Keep up Conversations Between Meetings

To continue making meetings more inclusive and effective, ask for input on how to organize the meetings in between times you meet.

Ask for input regarding:

- What are the best times and most comfortable and convenient places for everyone to attend? Especially, take time to reach out individually and ask people who have expressed interest but don't make initial meetings.
- Would people participate in different formats such as in-person meetings, video calls, or phone discussions? Ask about challenges and benefits of each.
- Would using visuals, handouts, or providing extra time for discussion, questions, group announcements etc. improve the meeting?

Ask for suggestions on how to keep the meeting clear and focused, try to get input from each person. This way, you can strive to ensure everyone has ownership and power to ensure you meet everyone's needs.



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

GROUP FORMING PROCESSES



Identify AND also Diversify

It can be helpful to form a group based on a shared identity - such as Black Farmers, Beekeepers, Veterans or Women & Non-Binary Farmers. Also incorporate opportunities to connect with and learn across identities since a diversity of perspective will strengthen what you learn and do together. Use your group agreements and commit to ways you can welcome and respect guests from all backgrounds and interests. Be especially mindful of your group's practices for welcome and inclusion especially when you invite and include folks who differ in identity from the majority of your group - particularly with respect to identities of race, gender, age, and experience level.



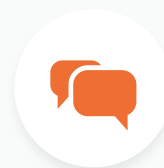
Prompts for Individual Reflection and Group Discussion



Reflect and Share One at a Time Around the Group

Take time for each participant to answer one or a few of these questions.

- What brought you here today?
- What would you like to contribute to this group as a member?
- How often would you like to meet?
- What are some concerns that might distract, disrupt or derail your efforts to meet regularly?
- What successes on your farm could you support others to achieve?
- How do you hope this group might help you overcome obstacles?



Suggested prompting questions for small group discussion:

- What is one action/change you are starting to plan or do in order to improve your life and work farming/ growing food/ selling food/ agricultural activities?
- What benefits do you hope will come from making time to connect, think and develop your ideas and activities in company and conversation with others?



2. Building to Last - Group Forming

DIVE DEEPER

Continue spending time to brainstorming your groups goals using activities such as:

- Each person writes ideas on sticky notes and then the group sorts them into categories or themes.
- Take notes on large poster paper in small groups or the full group. Taking time to clarify and discuss the ideas that people contribute
- Survey the group between meetings. Discuss the results.
- Word cloud with an online application

Definitions for group dynamics with an equity lens are available through the ABC's of Social Justice and Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture.

<https://college.lclark.edu/live/files/24761-social-justicevocabularypdf>

VARIATIONS

Potluck with a guest speaker who's not a regular member of your group like another farmer or Farm service provider (such as a conservation office staff member)

Rotate the responsibility for leading group goal and agreement setting processes.

CONNECTIONS

**** Add IPM icebreaker connection**

Facilitate "Implementing Collective Work and Responsibility" from Leading with Values Module -Activity 2. Use the organizational needs of this group as the tasks you discuss, divide up and rotate responsibility for in your meetings,



3. Maintaining Cohesion - Meeting Principles and Processes

Using a variety of effective and engaging processes and activities in your group meet-ups is important for keeping your collaborators engaged, interested, and best served by the time together.

OVERVIEW

In this Section:

- Logistics for meetings
- Ways to keep everyone engaged
- Example meeting formats

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Encourage each participant to share their ideas and reflections
- Facilitate group discussion and sharing. Hear from everyone.
- Connect participants - especially to discuss decision making and implementation approaches through group or pair activities
- Adapt to group interests and needs

ORGANIZERS' BACKGROUND

Pace information at the speed of the group:

Provide only enough reading, listening and viewing material to build shared definitions and to stimulate engagement with the ideas. By keeping reading and resources minimal, you free participants to pursue engagement and discussions that lead to action and change.

Prompt individual reflection and application:

Encourage and support individuals to pursue curiosities and interest into detailed specifics.

Facilitate group discussion: After introducing concepts, shift to processes so participants speak with one another to ask questions, critique and apply the ideas. Facilitator can take notes on a flip chart or board to assure clear understanding.

Connect participants: Any group member suggesting a learning topic should do very little teaching, explaining, or problem solving so that all of the members can establish a relationship to consult and support one another.

Adapt to group interests and needs: By continuing to discuss your individual and collective purpose, you can



3. Meeting Principles and Processes

MEETING PROCESSES

Logistics for Every Meeting

- Place to meet where all can hear
- If this is the first time at that location be sure all have directions and place signage by parking or road
- If videos or slide decks are used have a room where light can be controlled
- Have supplies such as flip charts, markers, and paper for last minute conversations
- When meeting time is long offer some refreshment (even just water)

Meeting Preparations:

Before each meeting, work with others to make a list of what needs to be discussed. Ask everyone for ideas to help make the meeting better.

When creating the agenda, include different types of activities that everyone will enjoy. Some people like to listen, while others prefer to write or talk. Make sure there's a way for everyone to share their thoughts.

Use Discussions to Gather Feedback Within the Process of Every Meeting

At the end of the meeting, ask people to share what they learned or to summarize what they are taking away from points that discussed. This helps everyone remember and understand what was said and also identify shared hopes and values.

Alternate Responsibilities and Leadership

In peer-to-peer groups, everyone should take turns leading meetings to make sure all people are seen and respected. Alternating responsibility helps everyone develop leadership skills, build confidence, and feel more involved. It also encourages teamwork, as members learn to support each other and share ideas, creating a more balanced and effective group.

Vary Meeting Approaches

Remember that not all meetings are formal. Sometimes, meetings can be casual, like a chat at a coffee shop. Whether it's a big meeting or a small gathering, it's important to make sure everyone feels comfortable and included.



Example Meeting Variety

1. Read and Reflect

Example meeting: Considering Conservation Practices

- Offer a brief overview of the topic
- Ask others who are familiar with this to add to the description.
- Look at any handouts, Websites or news articles about conservation practices
- Encourage additional ideas and questions to expand on the topic

3. Farm Journaling & Planning

Example meetings: Seeding your Vision & Plotting your Urban Farm from the Urban Agriculture Module

- Farm planning and reflection activities work well on multiple levels. They help people take time to reflect on the big picture of their work, and also connect them to one another through the deeper motivations and hopes they may share.
- Provide time for reflection, writing, and sharing with one another.

2. Guest Q&A

Example meeting: “Meet Your Local Produce Safety Technician” from Produce Safety Module.

- Invite a county, state or national level person who works with farmers in the county where your group members work.
- Ask them for a brief overview of their work and programs. Then encourage participants to ask questions.
- Discuss as a group what programs or practices they are interested to do more. Talk about what support you need or steps to take.

4. Storytelling Session

Example meeting: “Learn from the farmers” - Handout 1.3 from Introduction to Rural Land Access Module

- Suggest to your group a general farm topic, such as seeking land then ask each to share a short story about their experience.
- After all have completed their sharing, engage in a discussion of points learned from the sharing.



Meeting Variety Example #1: Read and Reflect -

EXAMPLE Read, Reflect, and Discuss a farming practice

- Members of the group to each read and reflect on a particular practice prior to a group discussion. Consider these questions:
 - What do you comprehend and feel confident to implement this practice based on your current knowledge and experience?
 - What do you need to research further and learn more about?
 - What seems like a barrier to success in implementing this on your land?

Having engaged in individual reading and reflection here is how you might structure time meeting as a group to discover individual learning, collective interests, and collaboration potential.

[15 min] **Whole group round robin** - (each person takes a turn sharing once to the group):

1. What about this practice is a current strength for you? What did you already know a lot about?
2. What about this practice is your biggest opportunities for increased knowledge and implementation on the land you steward?

[25 min] **Small breakout group discussion** (people talk in groups of 3 - 5):

What part of this practice are you currently implementing in some way?

1. What parts of this practice have you considered, especially what might you take on in the next 3 - 5 years?
2. What practices interest you that you are curious to learn more about?

[10 min] One member of each small group shares a summary of their discussion with the full group.



Meeting Variety Example #2: Guest Q&A - Guest Prep Message

EXAMPLE Message to Guest prior to a Q&A meeting

Thanks again very much for making the time available to discuss _____ practices with our Peer-to-Peer learning group.

We have done a bit of individual reading and reflection on your programs and I just wanted to share the following things that group members are interested to learn more about _____.

For your broader context regarding our group process, we began meeting in _____. Our groups purpose is _____. We identify as _____.

Additionally we have done the following things and focused on the following topics:

- _____
- _____



3. Meeting Principles and Processes (cont.)

DIVE DEEPER

Some alternative approaches for hosting a meeting:

- Have a different farmer participant be the facilitator for each meeting. Past facilitators should coach and support others to take on this responsibility.
- Invite an outside speaker, maybe an experienced farmer or a farmer who has mentored a beginning farmer and facilitated a question and answer after the talk.
- Go to a farm to see and maybe even try a new approach that was sought by the learners. Guidance for this in **section 4**.

VARIATIONS

Host the meetings at a different farm each time or once in a while. Share meeting responsibilities so that the host can focus on hosting and participating in discussion.

Sometimes simply gather in a social setting including: Potlucks and Community Meals, meeting at a restaurant or park.

CONNECTIONS

Use the "Choosing a way to collect farm information that works for you" found in the Soil Health Curriculum for note taking tips.

"Preparing for and Resolving Conflict"
- Leading with Values Module



4. Exploring & Sharing - Learning on Land

Observing agriculture and land management methods and effects firsthand is an incredible way to learn. It engages all of participants senses, shortcuts complicated verbal or written explanations of systems and equipment, and provides a relaxed and realistic setting for agricultural individuals to learn - thus strengthening connections between participant.

OVERVIEW

In This Section:

- Organizing a peer learning tour
- Communicating and coordinating a learning tour
- Facilitating reflection, discussion and learning
- Handouts for participant writing and reflection on tours

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Curiosity and vulnerability
- Mutual support and advice
- Diversify perspectives
- Strengthen group connections
- Learn by seeing and doing

ORGANIZERS' BACKGROUND

It is important for people who do land-based work to visit and observe on land with one another because it helps them learn, solve problems, and improve their own work.

1. **Learning New Techniques:** Visiting other farms shows different ways of managing crops and livestock.
2. **Solving Problems:** Every land-based production system faces challenges. By seeing how others handle these problems, people can find new solutions for their own operation.
3. **Sharing Knowledge:** Visiting other properties allows groups to exchange tips and experiences. Group learning can excel in saving people precious time and money often by illuminating failed trials by others in the group.
4. **Staying Current:** Farming practices change over time. By visiting other farms, people can see the latest tools, machines, and methods and keep their work up-to-date.
5. **Building Community:** By visiting one another's land, people build connections and a shared sense of place.



4. Learning on land (cont.)

FARM TOUR PROCESSES

Farm Tours

Peer-to-Peer farm tours are the best benefit for your time in planning a learning opportunity for your group.

- Farmers learn better from their peers
- Little infrastructure or planning is needed
- Able to share more region-specific knowledge
- See firsthand the practice that is being discussed
- Conversations are low-pressure and inclusive

Logistics

- Transportation - coordinate/facilitate car-pools
- Directions
- Scheduling
- Contingency Plan





4. Learning on land (cont.)

FARM TOUR PROCESSES

Communication Steps

- Communicate with Host - be sure to confirm the following details clearly to communicate clearly with your group:
 - Date, time, and location
 - Specific navigation advice (Are gps and online instructions reliable?, which driveway to use, routes to avoid such as seasonal roads)
 - Parking plan and instructions to guests
 - Bathroom facilities access. Drinking water availability.
 - Sensory environment: What are the sounds and smells that people may experience?
 - Current conditions on the farm (e.g. construction site, weather damage, mechanized work in progress)
- **Confirm tour with Group**
 - Once details established send out a confirmation email to the members of the group with all the important information.
 - Request a response or use a registration platform to plan for the appropriate number of attendees
- **Follow-up email, text and/or social media post with Group + Host**
 - Send an email, text and/or social media post a week or so in advance to remind group of the tour
 - Reconfirm details with the host if necessary and share changes with group if needed
- **Day of Event: communication with Group + Host**
 - Make contact with the host to confirm any last-minute details regarding the tour and communicate changes to the group.



Farm Tour Preparation Message Example

Preparation Message with Tour Host for In-Person Tour

Broad goals and thinking:

- What goals do you have for your property and agricultural endeavors? (top 1 - 6 goals ranked in order of priority, you might classify these in the areas such as Materials Reuse, Input reduction, Soil Health, Animal health, Biodiversity, Synergies between (eco)systems, Economic diversification).
- What challenges stand in the way of these goals or might get in your way as you take steps? (1 - 3 current or potential inhibitors)

Specific location highlights:

- 5 - 6 key locations on the property For each location:
- Describe: What are we looking at?
- Suggest: What potential or opportunity does the location suggest to you?
- Request: What input and advice are you requesting from others regarding this location?
- Are there any other significant features that we won't have time to visit that might be important to note, or which might have significant potential for carbon and conservation practices?

Logistics

Can you please provide input for the following aspects of a prep message to attendees? For full context I included the message with the blanks at the bottom of the email.

- **Are restroom facilities available or not? Please describe.**
- I also like to include this note regardless: *"Please take care of body necessities prior to arriving if possible prior to arriving - consider patronizing a nearby business as a quick rest stop prior to the tour. This will allow us to minimize traction in and out of their space and start tour activities on time"*
- **What additional navigation guidance should I include?**
- *"The farm location is not available via an internet mapping search, please navigate to address. For visual markers as you arrive, there is farm signage _____."*
- **What parking instructions should I provide?**
- **Any special conditions or precautions to specify?** (i.e. construction, terrain, conditions due to recent weather event, livestock, etc.?)
- **Do you welcome young adults, children, or pets with accompaniment?**



Farm Tour Preparation Messages (Cont.)

Tour Preparation Message for Participants

Thank you for your interest in the twilight tour, on (date) at (time). Tremendous appreciation goes to the farm family for opening up their home and land for our shared learning and enjoyment.

TOUR LOGISTICS:

Restroom facilities are/are not available _____. Please take care of body necessities prior to arriving if possible prior to arriving - consider patronizing a nearby business as a quick rest stop prior to the tour. This will allow us to minimize traction in and out of their space and start tour activities on time

DIRECTIONS:

The farm location is/is not available via an internet mapping search, please navigate to _____. For visual markers as you arrive, there is farm signage _____ and there will also be red "Event" signs on the turns as you approach.

PARKING:

Attendees are advised to park _____. Additional parking is offered _____.

ACCESSIBILITY:

Some of this tour will be held on natural landscape without accessibility improvements. Wear sturdy closed-toe shoes and be prepared to move across bumpy terrain. Please also be advised _____.

If you have limited mobility, arrive early if at all possible, and contact me at _____ so we can save you a parking spot and/or manage accommodations for you.



4. Learning on land (cont.)

FARM TOUR PROCESSES

Facilitated Learning and Discussion

- Take time for introductions so that the group is acquainted
 - Repeat introductions are helpful even in a familiar group
- With the host, repeat any important details (rough terrain, location of bathrooms, etc.)
- Be open to asking questions or facilitating questions between group members
- Make sure questions and discussion can be heard by the whole group
- Encourage participation by all attendees

Reflection and Evaluation

- Address any final questions or thoughts
- Reflection allows information and knowledge to stick with the group
- Collect input from the group for what they would like to see going forward this can help improve the process for following tours.





4. Learning on land (cont.)

DIVE DEEPER

"Field days are educational events held on-farm or on-ranch. They are organized and hosted by the producer, oftentimes in collaboration with agricultural educators. The events usually include demonstrations of specific management practices and equipment and/or highlight research methods and results. This Farmer Field Day Toolkit includes tips and tools to help you plan a successful event, including a suggested timeline, how to work with the media and create press releases, tips for making videos, and downloadable templates covering announcements, fliers and signage."

<https://www.sare.org/resources/the-farmer-field-day-toolkit/>

VARIATIONS

Virtual Tour

Create a digital slide deck with 3 - 5 key images (or even videos) that show parts of the property for agricultural activities. Connect for a video call and have the "host" describe the images and their activities. Engage in Q&A.

CONNECTIONS TO OTHER MODULES

- Constructing a portable hand washing station - Food Safety Module
- Learn from & Tour with an Urban Farmer
- SCAT Scouting from Produce Safety



Observing The Triple Bottom Line On Tours

Available as a Standalone Handout

Farm Name: _____

	Social	Environmental	Economic
Strengths			
Challenges			

How could this farm amplify their strengths? _____

How could this farm address their challenges? _____

Highlight the comments that you want to share with the farmers.

*Adapted from materials developed by the Michigan State University Organic Farmer Training Program _
https://www.canr.msu.edu/organic_farmer_training_program/*



Reflecting on Creativity & Innovation On a Tour

Available as a Standalone Handout

<i>Compare a farm with your current or future farm</i>	Farm _____	My farm or future farm:
Creative Land Access		
Creative Community Connections		
Creative Ecological Strategies		
Creative Marketing		
Creative approaches to labor and volunteers		
Creative funding and financials		
Other		