

Entrepreneurial Networking & Inclusive Engagement

What

The Connection Between Entrepreneurial Networking & Inclusive Engagement

The entrepreneurial thread continues to influence how leaders pursue opportunities without regard to resources currently controlled (Stevenson & Jarillo, 2007). Networks and partnerships are familiar topics within Extension. What makes this unique from an urban Extension perspective is the scale, multilevel networks, and degree of diversity in our communities. Whether it's your advisory committee/board, a project partner, or a collective impact effort, the entrepreneurial network framework serves as a solid foundation for

continuous development of your networks. As an organization with a funding base from federal, state, and local support, Extension relies on public officials, philanthropic donors, and other community organizations for support.

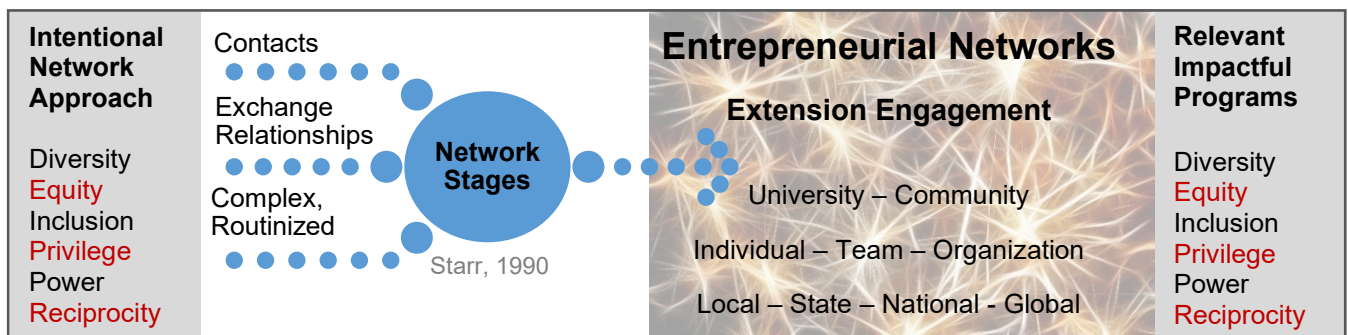
Our individual and organizational networks become stronger when we're intentional about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), privilege, power, and reciprocity. This focus improves everything we do, from the selection and engagement with our advisory groups, partners, and volunteers to the selection of our priorities, communication messaging, and the delivery and evaluation of our programs. While many valuable Extension and university resources focus on DEI for programming and organizational excellence, this publication recognizes the value of beginning with an intentional approach to networking, which contributes to relevant engagement models and impactful programs (Figure 1).

Entrepreneurial Networking & Inclusive Engagement

The ability to network is an entrepreneurial competency.
 Vyakarnam, Jacobs, & Pratten, 1995; Hill & McGowan, 1996

Inclusive engagement begins with intentional approaches to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our networks.
 Fox, 2021

Figure 1. Intentional entrepreneurial networks contribute to relevant engagement models and impactful programs



In an increasingly networked society, Extension professionals benefit from patterned relationships between individuals, groups, and organizations (Dubin & Aldrich, 1991). Networks facilitate co-operation within or among groups. Organizations are multilevel systems of relationships (Hitt, Beamish, Jackson & Mathieu, 2007). Creative collaboration requires a commitment to a shared vision; contribution of meaningful resources; unified movement toward a common goal; intentional and open communication; accountability (Ludwig, Andrews, & Ciccone, 2008) and operating as interdependent rather than altogether self-determinant (White, 2009).



Competencies

Networking and partnerships can be more challenging in the city than in rural areas for several reasons: Extension is frequently recognized as primarily an agricultural organization, there is greater competition for scarce resources, and multi-stakeholder agendas require Extension to have a unique mix of competencies, such as building social capital, developing intercultural sensitivity, and demonstrating inclusive and equitable engagement.

Building Social and Financial Capital

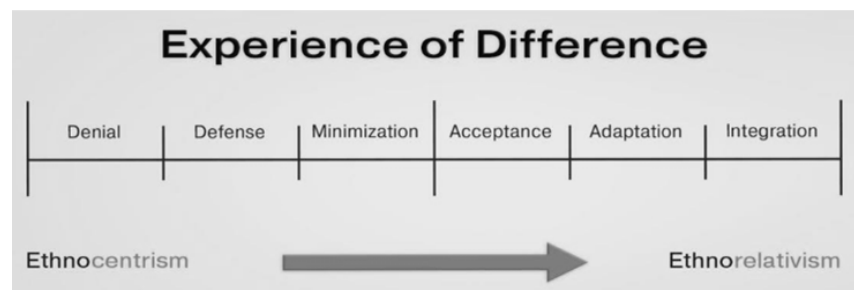
Building social and financial capital was identified as a key competency by Urban County Extension Directors (UCED). Social capital includes the links, shared values, and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and work together (Brian, 2007). In the [Competency Framework Development project](#), UCEDs explained that building social and financial capital required cultivating existing and new partnerships with foundations, corporations, relevant government personnel, and other sources to develop funding streams and new advocates. Urban Extension professionals navigate complex external and internal funding systems, build advocates, and serve on community, municipal, and other leadership boards. They know the political and funding landscape where they work and understand perspectives and expectations of partners.

Intercultural Sensitivity

The different ways we perceive and experience the world impact how we approach entrepreneurial networking and inclusive engagement. According to [Weigl, \(2009\)](#), intercultural sensitivity begins with awareness of one's

- historical roots and longstanding memberships
- beliefs, values, and worldviews
- settings and scripts important in your socialization
- group experiences
- personal characteristics rewarded by your culture related to gender, age, and social class
- the scripting of your personhood
- cognitive style
- overview of your cultural programming and identity

The [Intercultural Development Research Institute](#) shares resources such as Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, to support how we organize engagement and approach intercultural communications.



The topic of intercultural sensitivity links with several other topics, including

- Cultural competence – a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in an organization or among professionals and enable them to respectfully and effectively provide education to people with diverse values, beliefs, and behaviors, including tailoring engagement to meet social, cultural, and linguistic needs (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Betancourt et al., 2003).
- Intersectionality – the intersecting and complex power relations influencing social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life influenced by interrelated categories of race, ethnicity, age, class, sexuality, ability, and other dimensions ([Collins & Bilge, 2020](#)).

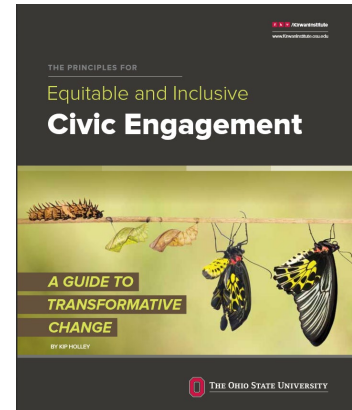


Inclusive and Equitable Engagement

Inclusive engagement not only welcomes new people to a network but engages them in decision making. Equity recognizes the unique resources and opportunities needed to reduce or eliminate the barriers that prevent Extension partners from engaging and achieving shared outcomes.

Inclusive and equitable engagement detailed in this [publication](#) from [Ohio State's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#).

- Embracing the Gifts of Diversity
- Hospitality: Invitation & Listening
- Realizing the Role of Power & Historical Inequities
- Building Trust Through Empowerment
- Honoring Disagreement & Dissent
- Adaptability to Community Change



So What

Internationally approaching networking with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion extends the Extension mission throughout the urban community.

Now What

Entrepreneurial networking begins with assessing existing networks, identifying opportunities, and mobilizing resources (Shane & Venkaraman, 2000).

1. Assess your networks

- List your individual and organizational networks, including those that
 - Extension manages, such as advisory committees
 - Extension engages with, such as serving on community organization boards
 - Extension collaborates through formal and informal partnerships
- Evaluate each to better understand how you can improve diversity, equity, inclusion.
- Question privilege and power, through multiple perspectives.
- Explore the level of reciprocity, recognizing that all partnerships are not necessarily equal, but clarity and intentionality benefit relationships.
- Consider your entire individual and organizational networking and partnership “portfolio” and then adjust strategies and activities to improve Extension impacts.
- Be entrepreneurial in identifying opportunities and leveraging resources.

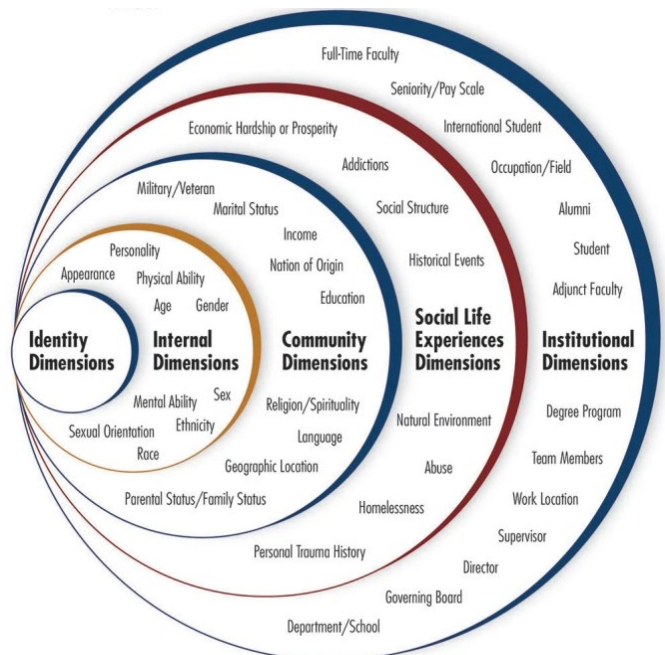
2. Reflect on your competencies (and add to your Four Dimensions of Leadership).

- **Building social and financial capital**, as outlined in the [Competency Framework Development project](#)
- **Intercultural sensitivity** to better understand yourself and to better work with colleagues, partners, and clients, review the 2009 article on [Intercultural competence through cultural self-study: A strategy for adult learners](#). In this article, Weigl outlines eight categories for self-study, as well as student and teacher factors restraining and facilitating the self-study process. This is a great guide for those who want a deeper understanding of themselves and a strategy for increasing their intercultural sensitivity.
- **Inclusive and equitable engagement**, as detailed in the [Guide for Transformative Change](#).

3. Consider what diversity means to you. If someone you trusted wanted to get to know you better, what 4-7 things might you include when telling them more about yourself? These [diversity wheels](#) provide perspective.



Johns Hopkins created this Diversity Wheel that represents internal dimensions that are usually most permanent or visible. The outside wheel represents dimensions that are acquired and change over the course of a lifetime.



Northcentral University. (2018). Diversity wheel

4. Update your four dimensions as you gain additional experiences, develop your competencies, clarify your drivers, and assess your characteristics.

5. Check out the entrepreneurial networking and inclusive engagement resources on the last pages of this document, including videos, tools, research, and additional assessments.

6. Explore and discuss entrepreneurial networking with your team. Discuss specific examples of how your organization supports or discourages diversity, equity, and inclusion.

7. Share this with colleagues and discuss agreement or disagreement on statements like these:

- Business know **who** is as important as business know **how** (Peterson & Rondstadt, 1986).
- “Playing well with others is hard work,” reports David Andrews (2006), dean of the OSU College of Education and Human Ecology. “Solitary play is simple and offers complete control. Unfortunately, it does not offer solutions to complex problems.”



Resources

[Link to Collection of Urban Extension Leadership Entrepreneurial Resources – Networking & Inclusive Engagement](#)

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This resource was developed for Leadership in the City participants. If it has been shared with you outside the course, you may not have access to all the linked material.

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