



The City of Calgary Community Social Work Community Connector Model Success Tips

What is a Community Connector?

A Community Connector is a paid community leader who engages and connects with their neighbours to learn about their community, identify local interests and needs to support community building ideas. An important role of Community Connectors is to identify local assets and skills and mobilize their networks to create opportunities for knowledge sharing.

Why use a Community Connector Model?

A Community Connector Model can help cultivate resident capacity for community leadership roles, future employment opportunities and the ability for those experiencing financial barriers to participate in community life. Community Connectors provide local knowledge and know-how on how to best engage their neighbourhood and leverage personal connections to create the foundation for community building work. This enhances the reach of a project by increasing community access and cultivating trust. Community Connectors can create community connections and build on relationships at a deeper and more sustainable level.

Practices for Success



BEST PRACTICES

HIRING

- Create a job posting with clear role descriptions
- Be intentional in hiring candidates that represent the community
- Consider gender, age, culture and life experiences representation
- Share job postings through local channels like community partners, agencies and in public spaces
- Design interview process intentionally – this is a great opportunity for candidates to develop their employment skills through practice
- Interviews should be scheduled with all partner organizations at the table to ensure that someone is available to answer all questions, including human resource or payment questions
- Ensure all organizations involved (funders, fiscal agent etc.) have a solid understanding of their role and responsibilities towards community connectors
- Ensure all organizations are involved in designing the hiring process to ensure goals are met
- Formal contracts with a Community Connector must be clear, concise and in line with the hiring organization's best practices

TRAINING

- Design a training and on-boarding process for Community Connectors to set them up for success. Orientation topics may include background information on the community development process and safety training
- Utilize or develop guidelines and policies around working alone situations, gender considerations, door knocking and other engagement activities
- Make different types of resources available that support the learning process. Use materials in plain language and provide practical examples
- If more than one Community Connector is hired, provide opportunities for the team to come together to share ideas, work collectively and make decisions

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

- Ensure regular supervision and opportunities to discuss challenges, learnings and opportunities
- Develop ways of evaluating the work that Community Connectors do, as well as the broader project. Potential measures can be quantitative and qualitative, such as number of new residents engaged, number of resident leaders and volunteers and anecdotal stories of success.

EXITING

- Set up termination and exiting processes
As successful Community Connectors near the end of their contracts, it is important to have a succession plan in place. This plan could include bridging community contacts; developing a sustainability plan, wrapping up outstanding projects and collecting/compiling all reports.